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FEATURE STORY

THE

MISSING EVIDENCE

by

Harold F. Podhaski

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About Our Next Number

WE are not going to brag about the next number of this publication, but intend to let our readers judge for themselves if it is not the very best issue we ever printed. There is going to be a great variety of reading matter so that all tastes will certainly be suited. You all know what a popular fad the radio has become? Well, we figured that many of our subscribers were fans, so we ordered a radio story as a feature for the July 15th number and an expert writer gave us a story entitled "The Clue by Radio." This novelette has a very unusual plot, it is brimming with exciting adventures, and it teems with enough technical matter to please any one who is interested in radio work. But even the technical part is so simplified that everybody can understand it. The story is purely a detective novelette, in which a strange mystery of the radio is skillfully developed. We are confident you will thoroughly enjoy this story.

Howard Philip Rhoades has written us another of his interesting short stories, entitled "Policeman Burke's Adventure"; there will be a good one from Earl C. McCain called "Better Judgment," and Bayard Yadon has written "The Empty Vault." There is also a story from Merritt L. Allen entitled "A Dog in the Manger," and a story by Katherine Stagg called "The Trunk from Up-State." The third and last installment of "The Black Diamond" will be published, and we have another short serial in active preparation to follow it. We only publish short serials, as we consider long ones very tiresome and unsatisfactory to our readers. By using short serials we can give you frequent changes to new stories, which means a greater variety of reading, and more pleasure for yourself.

Beginning with the next number there will be a slight change in the appearance of our cover. Look for the big "10 CENTS." It tells you what a low price we are charging for the high quality and large quantity of reading matter we are giving you. As we are constantly on the lookout for the very best stories written, we have secured a batch for the coming numbers of this magazine that will please you immensely. Some of the authors are people with big reputations who could not write an unsatisfactory story if they tried. As we wish to get a big following for this publication you will oblige us if you will recommend it to all your friends.

THE EDITOR.

The MISSING EVIDENCE

by Harold F. Podhaski

CHAPTER ONE

A BLEAK November wind tore its way through a nameless city's winding canyons, driving before it a drizzling sleet and dashing it around the corners in ghostly white specks like an icy whirlwind.

It was close to the hour of eleven, and presently the theatres began to open their doors. From the lobbies poured forth an almost endless stream of people, and the pavements began to stir with life again as they hurried this way and that in quest of shelter. Slowly and with expert precision the long line of vehicles started to untangle itself. Threading their way carefully around the corners the drivers brought their cars to a purring halt before the lobbies. One at a time they took aboard their fares, mingled again with the traffic and went upon their various ways.

Presently there emerged from one of the near-by theatres a well-dressed gentleman, who carried himself after the manner of one more or less satisfied with the ways of the world.

A casual observer would have judged him to be somewhere near the fortieth milestone in his journey through life. That Dame Fortune had dealt with him kindly was evidenced by the fact that a large diamond stud gleamed with a radiant fire against his white shirt front, exposed to view when his silk cravat opened as he paused a moment in the lobby to slip his arms into the sleeves of his gray overcoat. And one standing near by at the time would have also noted that another stone of equal size and radiance formed the setting of a ring that graced the third finger of his left hand. Yes, there was no doubt about it, he was a gentleman of some affluence.

Buttoning his overcoat tightly about his throat, he advanced to the edge of the pavement and beckoned to the chauffeur of a motor car that was drawn up against the curbing on the opposite side of the street. The chauffeur brought his car around into the waiting line, and the middle-aged gentleman deposited himself among the leather cushions as it came to a halt in front of the lobby and nodded to the driver to go ahead.

Scarcely had the driver bent his wheels toward the street and began to pick his precarious way through the traffic, when a shadowy figure emerged from a doorway close at hand and entered another car that had been waiting a few feet beyond the theatre. Whereupon the second car set forth in pursuit of the first.

Patrolman Dennis O'Leary proceeded southward along Forty-first street, until he had

reached the corner of Fifty-second avenue. Ordinarily Patrolman O'Leary was as good-humored an Irishman as ever swung a riot club, but a night like this was enough to scatter good humor to the four corners of the universe.

There are some who say that a policeman has an easy job, but if any one had been so indiscreet as to pass that remark within the hearing of Dennis O'Leary this particular night, there would have been trouble aplenty brewing forthwith. And the worst of it was that he still had a four-hour grind ahead of him.

Reaching the corner of Fifty-second avenue, O'Leary glanced at his watch and noted that it was ten minutes before the hour of twelve. He started then toward the patrol box at the corner beyond to phone his report to the station house.

It was rather dark along this street, and he had proceeded scarcely more than a dozen yards or so, when he stumbled over an inanimate form which lay sprawled across the sidewalk. It was O'Leary's first thought that the man was drunk, but when he knelt down beside the body and examined it with the aid of his flashlight he saw at once that he was wrong.

The man lay face downward upon the pavement, and the back of his heavy gray coat near the shoulders was saturated with blood. It was evident that he had been stabbed with a long-bladed knife, and the point of it had entered his body squarely between the shoulder blades.

O'Leary turned the figure over and then flashed his light upon the features of a man who might have been forty years old or thereabouts. Against the white shirt front the light reflected the radiant brilliance of a large diamond stud. Evidently robbery had not constituted the motive of the crime. The hat was pulled rather low over the eyes, and the policeman turned it back to get a better view of the face. For a moment he stared rigidly into the lifeless eyes——

"My God!" he exclaimed as recognition came to him.

Whereupon Dennis O'Leary put his police whistle between his lips and blew lustily for aid.

CHAPTER TWO

ROBERT J. BRADLEY lay aside his work and stood for several moments by one of the windows, gazing out upon the shadowy panorama of a rain-swept night. A velvety curtain of darkness seemed to hang like a black cloud above the city, a portion of its gloom shattered here and there by the gleaming rays of a light. Carried upon the wings of a sharp November wind, the rain came streaming against the window-panes, beating a ceaseless tattoo upon the glass.

Notwithstanding the fact that Bradley had intended giving himself over to complete repose, he found that his thoughts continually reverted to the work he had in hand. For several weeks he had labored with tireless energy, and now at last with the task completed he would look back upon his work conscious of the fact that he had done it well. This had been his first big job, and it was pleasant indeed to know that he had made good.

The Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice requires of its special agents an almost infinite degree of patience. It is one of the first and most important qualifications for success in this branch of government work. The will to face death without flinching in the performance of one's everyday duties is another. And Bradley knew that in this, his first real test, he had shown his chief he possessed both these qualities; that he was worthy of the confidence imposed in him.

Success attained through work well done affords one food for thought that is pleasant to dwell upon, and Bradley stood for several moments by the window running the details of the case over in his mind.

Two days hence when the federal grand jury convened he would be ready to lay before that body the mass of evidence he had gathered. Without doubt it would result in the finding of indictments against at least fifteen officials of the police department and the city administration then in power, to say nothing of a dozen professional politicians and ward heelers.

Bradley's primary difficulty in the handling of the case had been to reach the men higher up. It had really not been a very difficult matter to gather enough evidence to prove that a

conspiracy had existed; that its purpose had been to swing the city's vote at the last election. It had failed to accomplish that result, but the crime was none the less serious because of its failure.

The men higher up, however, had covered their tracks in so clever a manner that not one shred of evidence was Bradley able to gather substantial enough to even result in their indictment. And he knew for a certainty that it would never convict them when the case finally came up for trial, even should the grand jury return the indictments. However, at the last minute he had played his trump card, and it had raked in the pot.

While the Department of Justice cannot grant immunity to any one in return for state's evidence, the court is likely to impose a light sentence where it can be shown that such evidence proved of material aid to the government in its prosecution. The district attorney had gone carefully over the evidence Bradley had gathered, and he knew that unless something of this nature came to pass he would not be able to convict the men higher up. He had, therefore, decided to go the limit.

Less than two hours before Bradley had held a private conference at the Claybourne Club with James E. McPherson. Fully cognizant of the fact that the government had ample evidence to convict him even if all the others were to go free, McPherson had agreed to turn state's evidence in the hope that he might thus save his own hide. Had, in fact, given to Bradley a written and signed confession of the part he had played in the plot.

As a trusted political boss, McPherson had been on the "inside" of this thing from the very first, acting as a sort of a "go-between" in the handling of the funds, and a personal lieutenant in charge of affairs for the men who controlled the political ring. As it had turned out, however, he had proven the one weak link in the chain, and the government would now be able to build its entire case around his evidence.

As Bradley had already known, though had not been able to prove conclusively, the mayor and the chief of police were the ringleaders who had concocted the whole scheme. They were the two men the district attorney was most desirous of seeing brought before the bar of justice. But they had played their cards in so clever a manner that without McPherson's confession both would have wiggled out of the net, and the other poor devils would have had to pay their price for them. Now, however, both would be convicted beyond any reasonable doubt.

Bradley crossed over to his desk again and picked up the single sheet of paper, holding it for a few moments between his fingers while he read it through for at least the tenth time. Yes, there was no doubt about it, Messrs. Schrader and Klein were in for a nice little stretch behind the gray walls of a federal prison.

When he had finished reading he laid the paper back upon the surface of his desk. On the morrow he planned to turn it over to the district attorney, as he had done with the other evidence he had gathered. That, then, would virtually end his work on the case, save that he would have to appear as a witness both before the grand jury and later when the case came to trial.

Leaning back in his chair, Bradley closed his eyes and sat there for several moments apparently in thought, his hands laying folded in his lap before him. His Japanese servant appeared suddenly in the doorway from one of the adjoining rooms.

"Is it not too close in here, Mr. Bradley?" he asked. "Shall I not raise one of the windows, sir?" He was always very solicitous of his master's welfare, was Cato; an admirable servant indeed in every sense of the word.

"Why, yes, Cato, I wish that you would," Bradley replied. "It does seem a little close in here, now that you mention it." He did not look up, did not, in fact, even open his eyes.

Cato crossed over to one of the windows and raised it about a foot above the sill. Completing the task, he busied himself for a moment or two straightening up the chairs, and placed a cover over the typewriter on Bradley's desk. Whereupon he quietly left the room, closing the door behind him.

For several minutes after he had left Bradley did not change his position. Finally, however, he selected a cigarette from the case on a stand near his elbow and lit it. Glancing at his watch, he noted that it was fifteen minutes before the hour of ten. Conscious of a rather

drowsy feeling, resulting no doubt from relaxation now that his work had been completed, he decided to retire. First, however, he would have to put McPherson's confession away for safe keeping until the morrow.

Then, for the first time in several minutes, he glanced down at the place on his desk where he had left that single sheet of paper. Whereupon he rubbed his eyes and looked again, rather inclined to believe that his sense of sight had played him a trick. But no, it had certainly not done so.

The sheet of paper was not there on his desk where he had left it but a few moments before.

As he stared, mystified, a sudden gust of wind came bursting through the open window, and he saw—or thought he saw at least—what had probably happened. It had merely blown off the desk, and he would doubtless find it somewhere about the room.

However, a diligent search conducted for several minutes failed to reveal its presence. He concluded finally that it must have blown out of the window itself. If that were true, and it seemed to offer the only explanation possible, then by this time the wind might have carried it half a dozen blocks. There was hardly a chance in the world of his finding it in the street outside, but he decided nevertheless to have a look for it.

Heedless of the driving rain which was dashed against his face like a million pricking pin-points, he hurried outdoors and began another diligent search for the missing sheet of paper. But it was nowhere to be found. Finally he gave up the effort and returned again to his study.

After all, the loss of McPherson's confession was really not a very serious matter. It would be easy enough to see the man again on the morrow and secure another statement from him. As a matter of truth, Bradley had only obtained a signed confession in order to play absolutely safe. The chances were that he would not have to make use of it at all, for with McPherson himself on the witness stand to give state's evidence, that was all that was necessary.

Still, if anything of an unforeseen nature should suddenly happen to James E. McPherson——

Bradley did not find that a very pleasant thought to dwell upon.

CHAPTER THREE

IT seemed to Bradley that he had scarcely closed his eyes in sleep when he was suddenly awakened by the loud and insistent ringing of a bell. It was his first thought that it was the telephone by the side of his bed, and he was on the point of reaching for the receiver when the summons was repeated. It was not the telephone, however, but the doorbell in his study which some one was ringing from the vestibule below.

He slipped into a dressing gown and, entering his study, turned on the lights. The clock on the mantel shelf indicated the hour of one-twenty. Wondering who his nocturnal caller might be, he crossed the room and pressed an electric button in the wall, which released the catch on the door in the vestibule. A moment later he heard the clatter of feet coming up the stairs, and presently the sound of a step approaching along the corridor. Just outside his door there was a long pause, and Bradley was beginning to wonder what occasioned the delay when he heard the sound of knuckles pounding against the panels.

"Come in!" he invited.

Accustomed to experiences of a wide and varied nature in his daily work, it was seldom that Bradley's features ever displayed any sign of emotion, for he was always ready for the unexpected to happen at the unexpected moment. This occasion, however, proved an exception to the rule, and he stared with no little surprise at the man who swung open the door and stepped inside the room in response to his invitation.

For he wore a long gray mask, which concealed his face entirely from the forehead to the chin, with narrow slits for the eyes. He had apparently but just donned it, for he was still adjusting one of the strings as he entered the room.

In a moment, however, Bradley recovered from his surprise, and without comment as to this extraordinary behavior on the part of his nocturnal caller he motioned the man toward

a chair he had drawn up on the opposite side of the desk. Nor did the man himself make comment as he came over and sat down in the chair, leaning across the desk with his arms akimbo upon it. For a long moment he peered intently into Bradley's face through the narrow slits in the mask. Finally——

"Mr. Bradley, for reasons which will later become obvious it is necessary that I keep my features masked during this conference," he declared in a somewhat stentorian tone of voice. "I am here to discuss with you a certain case which you are now handling in your official capacity as a representative of the Department of Justice, and to be absolutely frank with you about it I do not wish you to know my identity. I realize that my action may seem somewhat unusual and perhaps a bit mysterious, but because of the nature of the matter I wish to discuss with you, you will understand shortly why no other choice is left open to me. If you are willing to overlook the trivial matter of my identity we will proceed at once to business. Otherwise I will find it necessary to leave without further discussion."

It was not entirely to Bradley's liking to do business with a man who found it necessary to conceal his identity in this unusual way. However, his curiosity was aroused, and he decided finally that there could at least be no harm in hearing what the man had to say.

"I am willing that you should state your business if you wish," he declared, "but I cannot promise you that my interest will extend beyond that point. I can see no reason why you should hide your identity, and I tell you frankly that I am not overly fond of the idea. If it pleases you to do so, however, for the present at least I will offer no objections."

"Very well, Mr. Bradley. I will promise to take up only a few moments of your time.

"I will tell you in the first place that I represent interests in this matter very much opposed to your own. I am here to offer you a proposition, and you may accept it or not, of course, just as you desire.

"You will be surprised, no doubt, when I tell you that I know all about your conference last night at the Claybourne Club with James E. McPherson. I know, too, exactly what occurred during that conference. You discussed with McPherson the matter of his turning state's evidence in this case, and you virtually promised him immunity for himself in the event he would agree to do so. Well, to make a long story short he accepted your proposition, and at the same time he wrote out and signed a so-called confession of the part he is supposed to have played in this election scandal. In that statement he no doubt implicates certain men whose names it is hardly necessary that I mention. You yourself have not been able to gather enough evidence against these men to bring about their indictment, and were it not for McPherson's confession and his promise to turn state's evidence, the government would not be able to connect these men with the case in any way; at least they would not be able to prove it to the satisfaction of a hard-headed jury. Am I right or am I wrong, Mr. Bradley?"

Bradley lighted a cigarette, tossed the match into the fireplace, and leaning back in his chair, he sat for several minutes in silence staring at the man on the opposite side of his desk. He was at first inclined to believe that he must have played like a dupe into McPherson's hands, but when he gave the matter more thought he began to doubt that possibility, for he saw no way in the world where the man could gain anything by such a course.

He wondered, too, how this mysterious caller of his had acquired all his accurate knowledge as to what had passed between himself and McPherson during that conference. He had certainly hit the nail squarely upon the head, and in so doing had dealt Bradley somewhat of a jolt. It was evident that his conference with McPherson had not been quite so private as he had planned it to be. So far as he could see, only two explanations were possible to account for it—there had either been a dictaphone concealed somewhere about the room, or McPherson, for some reason or other, had dealt his cards from the bottom of the deck. Of the two theories he was more inclined to accept the former.

"You seem to know as much about the matter as I do," he said finally. "You may be right and you may be wrong; I admit nothing. Go on, please."

"Well, I am going to get right straight to the point then without any beating about the

bush," the man in the mask declared, leaning farther across the desk. "We know quite well that if McPherson's statement does not find its way into the hands of the grand jury, no indictments will be returned against the parties he doubtless implicates in that statement.

"The clients I represent, Mr. Bradley, stand ready to pay you the sum of $100,000 to keep that statement from reaching the federal grand jury."

The man's proposition took Bradley's breath away for the moment. It was not that he was tempted to accept the bribe even had he been offered a million, but it was the unusual and dramatic manner in which he had chosen to present the offer. Then, too, there was McPherson still to account for, and he wondered how they would propose to handle him. He was doubtless a man who could ordinarily be bought for a certain price, but in this particular instance unless he accepted the offer of the prosecution and turned state's evidence, he was up against a five-year term at least in a federal penitentiary. No definite assurance of immunity had been promised him, but nevertheless in exchange for whatever aid he might render the government in its prosecution of the case, it was a certainty that the court would be very lenient in passing sentence for the part he himself had played in the crime. And Bradley was well enough acquainted with the man to know that he would much prefer taking his chances in this way to the acceptance of any bribe he might be offered. Furthermore, he was already well fixed financially, so it was not a case of his needing the money.

Several minutes passed while Bradley was running this matter over in his mind; the man on the opposite side of the desk watching him closely the while through the narrow slits in his mask. Evidently believing that his proposition was being considered, he leaned further across the desk and repeated his offer, carefully emphasizing each word.

"Remember, Mr. Bradley, $100,000 if McPherson's confession does not find its way into the hands of the federal grand jury. And if that isn't enough, please name your own figure. If it is reasonable we will do our best to meet it."

"I haven't the slightest intention of accepting any sort of a bribe," Bradley returned. "I was merely wondering how you would propose to counter McPherson's evidence, for I am certain he will prefer leniency for himself to any sort of a bribe you might offer. You may tell your clients for me that with McPherson on the stand they haven't a chance in the world of escaping the net."

"Permit me to assure you, my friend, that McPherson will not take the stand." There was a confidence to the tone of his voice and the manner in which he made this assertion that was rather disconcerting to Bradley for the moment.

"What—what do you mean?" he asked quickly, somehow seeming to sense what was coming.

"Mr. Bradley, it is not our desire to do any one bodily harm if it can possibly be avoided. But I don't mind telling you here and now that you are dealing with desperate men. It is quite apparent that you have not as yet heard the news, so I shall be the first to tell you of it. McPherson proved himself a traitor to his former friends and associates, and McPherson has paid the price that the traitor must expect to pay."

"My God! You don't mean—surely you have not mur——"

"Please do not use that very harsh word, my friend," the man in the mask interrupted. "Let us say, rather, that McPherson has met with an untimely end."

For fully a minute Bradley sat quite still in his chair. This was indeed a staggering blow to his hopes. The loss of McPherson's signed confession, a matter which he had not at first considered of any great importance, loomed now as nothing short of a calamity. Without it he knew that it would be virtually impossible to convict the men higher up.

As to McPherson himself, the only personal interest he had in the man was the part he had been cast to play when the case came up for trial in the federal court. He had known him only by reputation, and it might be added that his reputation was none too savory. Finally he turned again toward the man in the mask.

"A moment ago you stated that we were dealing with desperate men," he declared. "McPherson's death—it was doubtless murder, call it what you may—evidently proves your statement to have been correct. How-

ever, that fact does not affect my own position in the slightest degree."

Then suddenly he leaned across the desk and looked squarely into the steel-gray eyes that were watching him from beneath the silken folds of the mask.

"I can see now why you wanted to conceal your identity," he continued. "But you didn't succeed in doing so.

"I am going to send you to a federal penitentiary, Mr. John L. Schrader, if it is the last thing I do on God's green earth." Bradley did not raise his voice, but the tone of it nevertheless carried conviction. The effect of his words could have been no more startling had he struck the man squarely across the face.

He seemed to cringe down in his chair, and for some time he sat there nervously clutching the arms of it with his fingers, his breath coming sharply as though some strong emotion gripped him. Finally he got to his feet and several times paced back and forth across the floor. Then suddenly he came back to the desk and, facing Bradley on the opposite side of it, he jerked off the mask.

"Yes, I am the mayor," he declared. "I couldn't trust this matter to any one else, so I handled it myself. How in the devil you found it out I don't know, but I admit my identity."

"It would have been better, perhaps, if you had not worn cuff links with your initials upon them, Mr. Mayor," Bradley said quietly. "Otherwise I would probably not have learned your identity. Under the circumstances I naturally guessed that the initials, J. L. S., stood for John L. Schrader. However, that is not a matter of moment. Inasmuch as I am not interested in your proposition, let us consider this conference at an end."

"Very well, Mr. Bradley. It shall be as you say. We have met you more than halfway, but you have not seen fit to accept our offer. However, if you happen to change your mind, you will find my telephone number there in the directory. I bid you good-night."

The mayor walked quickly to the door, turned the knob, and in another moment had passed out into the hallway. And presently Bradley heard the door slam shut in the vestibule below

CHAPTER FOUR

IMMEDIATELY the mayor had taken his departure Bradley telephoned the editorial department of one of the morning newspapers and verified the matter of McPherson's death.

The body had been discovered, he learned, by a patrolman named O'Leary. It was lying sprawled across the sidewalk directly in front of McPherson's home near the corner of Forty-first street and Fifty-second avenue. He had been stabbed in the back with a long-bladed knife. Robbery had not been the motive, according to the police reporter with whom Bradley talked, for when the body was found the man was wearing a large diamond stud, a diamond ring, and had plenty of money in his pockets. Inspector John Furley had taken personal charge of the case, and so far as Bradley's informant knew, there were no clues at all by which the murderer's identity might be established. The whole case, he declared, was a profound mystery to the police because they could not ascertain the motive that had impelled the crime.

Whereupon Bradley thanked him and hung up the receiver.

While the murder of James E. McPherson was closely connected with the case he had in hand, he could see no reason why he should give the matter his personal attention. He was not connected with the official force, and it was up to the police to find the murderer if they could do so. Bradley already knew the motive; could, in fact, name the parties responsible for the man's death. And, so far as he could see, the finding of the actual murderer would not help his own case in the slightest degree. The man who had sent McPherson to his death was doubtless nothing more than a professional henchman. He himself would probably not know the identity of the person who had hired him, or the real motive behind the crime.

He was gratified, however, to know that so capable a man as Inspector John Furley was in personal charge of the case. For if there was any man connected with the police department who was really on the square, that man was none other than Inspector Furley. On two or three occasions Bradley knew that efforts had been made to oust him by the po-

litical ring that controlled the present city administration, but they had never succeeded in doing so for the simple reason that public opinion was opposed to his removal without due and just cause. And when public opinion makes its real power felt, no political ring can counteract it.

He decided that on the morrow he would acquaint Inspector Furley with the various facts he happened to know about the murder.

Considering the matter of McPherson's death from every angle, it seemed to Bradley that the only way he could now bring his own case to a successful conclusion was to find that bit of missing evidence. It had undoubtedly blown out of the window, and the proverbial needle in the haystack would be a trivial task compared to the finding of that single sheet of paper. Still it was worth the effort at least, and if Providence were kind to him he might possibly succeed in his quest.

He retired presently, and sleep came to him almost immediately. But for some reason or other it seemed that Fate would not permit Bradley uninterrupted repose. What served to awaken him he did not exactly know, but he had hardly slept more than two hours at the most when he roused up suddenly to find himself in a cold sweat. A strange, vague feeling as of danger close at hand seemed to possess him. At first he thought it the result of a physical nightmare, for he had experienced an unpleasant dream, and the incidents of it stood out vividly in his imagination. He sat up in bed and tried to peer through the dim and murky blackness that enveloped him. He listened intently, but the only sound which came to him was the ceaseless tattoo of the rain against the windows. Finally he concluded that it must have been his fancy. He laid down again and closed his eyes.

He was almost on the point of dozing off again when there came suddenly to his ears a soft, tinkling sound, as of some one tapping lightly with a hammer against a metal surface. He was wide awake in an instant, listening for the sound to be repeated. It came again presently, irregular at first, then insistently:

Tap, tap, tap, tap.

Reaching for the automatic beneath his pillow, he rose from his bed and crossed softly to the door leading into the study. He paused for a moment to listen again, his ear close to the panels. He could hear the rythmical tapping quite plainly emanating from somewhere on the other side of his study door. Outside the storm had spent its force for the moment at least, and save for that soft, insistent tapping there seemed to be a strange intermission of immediate sounds.

For a while he stood there in the darkness undecided, the automatic gripped tightly in the palm of his hand. Then suddenly he stiffened. His nostrils had detected the faint, pungent odor of burning metal. The tapping had ceased, and in its stead there came to his ears a curious hissing sound like escaping steam, scarcely audible at first, but gradually swelling in volume. He knew in a flash what was taking place on the other side of the door.

Some one was undoubtedly trying to burn their way into his safe with an acetylene torch.

Quickly he switched on the lights in his bedroom, and holding the automatic ready for instant use, he threw open the door.

A man was kneeling before the safe in a far corner of the room, directing a blue stream of fire from a blow torch against the solid metal door. Taken entirely by surprise, he whirled around, hesitated for a brief moment, and then noting the weapon in Bradley's hand, he evidently decided that discretion would be the better part of valor. Whereupon he dropped the torch and raised his arms above his head at the sharp command of "Hands up!"

"What the devil are you doing here?" Bradley asked as he moved toward the electric light button on the other side of the room. "Keep your hands up or——"

Then suddenly a powerful arm encircled his throat from behind, another reached over his shoulder, and seizing his wrist in a vise-like grip, shook the automatic from his grasp and sent it spinning into a corner. A knee was forced against the middle of his back and he crumpled backward to the floor, where he was held powerless in spite of his struggles.

Fully aware of the hazard of his situation, Bradley fought desperately for a moment to shake off the grip that was slowly choking the life out of his body. In a fair fight he was more than a match for an average man, but in this instance he was at a decided disadvantage,

and though he struggled gamely the arm about his throat refused to loose its hold.

In the meantime the man who had been trying to open the safe took a bottle from his pocket and saturated a handkerchief with its contents. He came then to the assistance of the other, and clamping the handkerchief over Bradley's nostrils he held it there. As the odor of the chloroform found its way into his lungs Bradley felt his senses gradually leaving him. After a while he became vaguely conscious of the fact that the wiry arm no longer encircled his throat. He seemed to hear the ceaseless roar of a torrent in his ears as he fought weakly for another moment to regain his breath. Finally, however, his struggles ceased altogether, his body grew limp; for a brief instant he felt as though he were falling through space; then came blackness and oblivion.

The sun was shining brightly into his bedroom when Bradley awoke several hours later. His brain seemed somewhat befogged, and memory was a long time coming back to him. He was conscious, too, of a throbbing pain in his head, a dull numbness in his limbs. Finally, however, he began to recall one at a time the incidents that had preceded the loss of his senses.

He had seen a man kneeling before the safe; he had covered him with the automatic and started across the room to turn on the lights. And what had happened then? Oh, yes. Some one had seized him from behind, almost had choked the life out of him; another man whose presence in the room he had failed to note. Then there had been a brief struggle, and what next? Something—something pressed to his nostrils. Chloroform. Finally a sense as of falling through endless space, and then oblivion. After that they must have picked him up and brought him into the bedroom.

But what the devil had they been after? Ordinary thieves would surely not ply their trade in a modest bachelor apartment where they could hope to find little or nothing of real value. What, then? The paper, of course. McPherson's confession.

He slipped out of bed, and donning a dressing gown hurried into the study. The room was in a dreadful state of confusion. An entrance had been affected to the safe by burning a hole in the metal door around the edge of the lock. Its contents were strewn all about the floor. They had gone through his desk, too, and treated it in a like manner. There had been three or four Liberty Bonds in the safe, and a hurried search for them among the scattered papers shortly revealed their presence.

He knew for a certainty then exactly what they had been looking for. But their quest had been in vain. A grim smile found its way into the corners of Bradley's mouth. Ill indeed is the wind that blows no good for some one.

Perhaps, after all, it would prove to be a providential wind that had picked up that single sheet of paper, carried it out through the open window, and consigned it to the tender mercies of the night.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE district attorney pushed aside his work and with a cheery nod greeted the man who had just entered his office.

"Well, Bradley, what luck?" he asked, motioning his caller to a chair by the side of his desk.

Bradley came over and sank dejectedly into the chair. It was quite apparent to the district attorney that he was not to receive a favorable answer to his question.

"None whatever, Mr. Lamb," he replied, selecting a cigarette from his case and lighting it. He watched the smoke for a moment as it curled upward. "The thing is gone, and I guess that's the end of it."

"The advertisement has produced no results, eh?"

Bradley shook his head.

"I've had the thing running now for three days in all of the newspapers. If any one found McPherson's confession and happened to read that advertisement, they would understand it. I had to word it carefully, of course, because it won't do to let the other side know we have lost the thing. So far I have heard nothing from it."

Mr. Lamb picked out a cigar from a box on

his desk, snipped off the end of it between his teeth, and lighted it deliberately. He leaned back in his chair and smoked for some minutes in silence.

"It will be one of the greatest disappointments in my life, Bradley, if those two devils wiggle out of this thing," he remarked finally, his eyebrows coming together in a slight frown. "And I am very much afraid that they will do so unless we can find McPherson's confession. Still, I want you to know that you have made good on this case regardless of that fact.

"The grand jury made a partial report of its findings less than an hour ago, and I was just looking it over when you came in. On the strength of the evidence you were able to gather they have returned twenty-three indictments, sixteen of which are against city officials. They did not, of course, indict either Schrader or Klein, and they will not do so unless we can offer more substantial evidence against them. However, I think that we have done very well indeed."

"I appreciate your kindness in taking that view of the matter, Mr. Lamb," Bradley assured the district attorney. "However, I, myself, do not look upon it in that light. The loss of McPherson's statement was utter carelessness on my part, and unless I am able to find it I can never feel that I have made good on this case. I suppose the chances are a thousand to one against me, but I still have hopes nevertheless."

Mr. Lamb looked at him curiously .

"You have more optimism then than I have," he replied with a smile, glancing at his watch. "The grand jury adjourns at three o'clock this afternoon. If your hopes are realized it will have to be within the next four hours. Of course, if anything should happen after that I could call a special session, but to be absolutely frank with you, Bradley, I don't think we have a chance in the world of ever finding that paper."

"Perhaps you are right, but I am going to keep at it regardless."

"Well, I admire your spunk, anyhow. By the way, I understand the police made an arrest this morning in connection with McPherson's murder. Do you know anything about it?"

"Yes, they've got the man who did it all right, but it doesn't help our case a bit."

"I had hardly dared hope that it would," Mr. Lamb replied, drumming his fingers thoughtfully upon the surface of the desk. "Who was it?"

"A professional crook. He is known in the underworld, I believe, as 'Limpy' Louis. Ever hear of him.

"Is his last name Morgan?"

Bradley replied with a nod.

"Yes, I have heard of him," Mr. Lamb confessed. "Sent him up for counterfeiting about ten years ago. Are they sure he is the man who killed McPherson?"

"No doubt about it," Bradley assured him. "Inspector Furley put him through the mill, and he made a complete confession. He claims he was hired to do the thing and that he doesn't have the least idea who hired him. They evidently got to him in a roundabout way just like they handled this election business. He's undoubtedly telling the truth. I am glad Furley got him, but just as I expected, the arrest doesn't profit our case to the slightest degree."

"No, I guess not," Mr. Lamb briefly admitted. "The only thing that will profit us now will be the finding of that missing evidence. I am not exactly a pessimist, my boy, but I'm afraid we're beaten."

Bradley rose to his feet, pinched out his cigarette and tossed it through an open window.

"You may be right," he declared. "However, I am not going to admit it until I have to. While there is life, you know, Mr. Lamb, there is always hope."

CHAPTER SIX

ON a certain morning at a certain hour that mysterious power we call Fate guided the footsteps of one Mr. Edward Greene along a certain street. There are some who might contend that Fate had nothing whatever to do with it, and for aught I know they may be right. At any rate Mr. Greene proceeded along the aforesaid street, and in view of events which shortly thereafter

came to pass I am more or less inclined to believe that Fate must surely have had a hand in the matter.

For as Mr. Greene proceeded upon his way a slip of paper suddenly came fluttering through the air and fell upon the sidewalk directly in front of him. He glanced up at the apartment house he happened to be passing at that particular moment, thinking that the paper might possibly have fallen from one of the windows. He waited for a brief time, but as no one appeared at any of the windows, he finally picked up the sheet of paper and proceeded to examine it. He could see that it was typewritten, but without the aid of his glasses he was unable to decipher its contents. Whereupon he folded it up again, glanced once more toward the apartment house, and slipped the paper into his coat pocket. Having done so, he continued upon his way, and in another moment this seemingly trivial incident had passed out of his mind altogether.

While Mr. Greene, of course, was not aware of the fact, that slip of paper had snuggled for almost three days and three nights among the ivy vines which twined their way upward along the front of the apartment building. It had blown out of one of the windows three nights before and caught up there in the ivy vines the thick leaves had offered it shelter from the inclement weather. And finally it had worked itself loose and fluttered to the sidewalk at the precise moment Mr. Greene happened to be passing.

He, as previously stated, however, knew nothing of all this. Nor did he know that there were certain parties who would have gladly given some thousands of dollars to obtain possession of that innocent-looking sheet of paper. It is possible that an entirely different story might have been written had Mr. Greene been cognizant of all these various facts. But Fate, it seems, had cast him to play this rôle all ignorant of the fact that momentous issues hung in the balance.

Two blocks beyond the point where Mr. Greene first entered our story he turned suddenly to cross the street without taking the sensible precaution of glancing either to the right or the left of him. That, however, is nothing unusual for a person to do, according to the many accounts of accidents we read about every day in the newspapers. Anyhow, be that as it may, Mr. Greene started across the street without assuring himself that his physical welfare would not be impaired by doing so. And scarcely had he proceeded more than half the distance when a big gray touring car dashed suddenly around the corner. The driver made frantic efforts to avoid the collision with this careless pedestrian, but only partially succeeded in doing so. The front fender caught Mr. Greene squarely amidships, as it were, and sent him sprawling into the gutter, where he brought up against the curbing and stretched out upon the pavement quite limp and lifeless.

The automobile came to a halt a few feet beyond, and a well-dressed gentleman of distinguished appearance stepped quickly out of it, hurried back to the scene of the accident, and knelt down beside the prostrate figure of Mr. Greene. A hasty examination revealing the fact that he apparently was not seriously hurt, the gentleman summoned his chauffeur, and together they lifted the inanimate form into the automobile. Whereupon he instructed his chauffeur to drive on again, and the car promptly continued upon its way.

Several people had witnessed the accident, and a curious crowd quickly gathered. One man imparted the information to another that the distinguished-looking gentleman was none other than the mayor of the city, and the knowledge quickly spread to the ears of those who did not happen to know "His Honor" by sight. No one, therefore, saw fit to interfere when the injured man was lifted into the automobile, and as the car disappeared around a near-by corner the crowd dispersed to go on about its business, little realizing that a most extraordinary thing had come to pass. And least of all did Mr. John L. Schrader realize it himself.

For several blocks the car sped onward, finally turning in at a driveway before a large brownstone residence. By this time Edward Greene had partially recovered his senses, but he was still in a somewhat dazed condition as a result of his experience. However, he was not long in regaining full control of his faculties after he had been supported into the house and a dram of brandy forced between his lips. Forced is perhaps not the proper

word to use, for if there was anything that made the blood tingle in the veins of Mr. Greene that thing was strong drink. He was exceedingly fond of any beverage that had the smell of alcohol about it, but being a poor man, he could not afford to pay prohibition prices. The taste of the sparkling fluid therefore brought him quickly and entirely back to his senses.

"How do you feel?" the mayor inquired, relieved to note that the victim of his automobile was apparently little the worse as a result of the accident.

Having assured himself that his injuries constituted nothing more serious than a few minor bruises, Mr. Greene declared that he guessed he wasn't badly hurt.

"You might give me another drink of that brandy, though," he hinted, casting a longing glance at the decanter which had not as yet been returned to its cabinet.

The drink was quickly forthcoming, and Mr. Greene, accepting it with more or less alacrity, dashed it off at a gulp—seemingly a matter of trivial consequence and rather irrelevant to the narration of this story. However, it will be well to bear in mind the fact that there are times when momentous issues are decided by just such trivial incidents, and this, it so came to pass, was one of them.

For as Mr. Greene finished his drink he drew from his coat pocket a handkerchief, with which he proceeded to wipe off his lips, and at the same time there came forth with the handkerchief a folded sheet of paper. Unnoticed by either of the two men, it fell to the floor directly by the side of an overflowing waste-basket. And there it was destined to remain until—well, until quite some time later.

"I'm mighty glad you weren't badly hurt, Mr.—Mr.——" The mayor, not knowing the name, hesitated.

"Greene, sir," that gentleman informed him. "Edward Greene."

"Mr. Greene," the mayor continued, "you had a pretty narrow escape. I am very sorry——"

"Tut, tut, my friend," Mr. Greene interrupted. "Nothing to be sorry about, I assure you. It was all my own fault." Feeling the warmth of the brandy as it coursed its way through his veins, he waxed benevolent, as was generally his custom on such occasions.

"I am certainly glad that you feel that way about it, Mr. Greene," the mayor assured him. He was greatly relieved over the fact that there would probably be no damage suit with its resultant unfavorable publicity. "If you are feeling all right," he continued, "I'll just have my chauffeur drive you home."

Mr. Greene thanked him.

"I would certainly appreciate it. I do feel a little bit stiff in the joints yet, but outside of that I'm as good as I ever was."

Whereupon Edward Greene took his departure, and as he passed out the door he likewise passes out of our story.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SCARCELY had Mr. Greene departed when the mayor sat down before his desk and began to read, with a great deal of interest, a special edition of the *Journal* he had purchased but a short while before. Spread across the top of the first page in glaring type was the headline:

"GRAND JURY INDICTS CITY OFFICIALS"

Beneath was printed a two-column account of the grand jury's partial report of its findings in the investigation of the election scandal, and the mayor read it through carefully from beginning to end.

When he had finished he laid the paper aside, selected and lit a cigarette, and leaning back in his chair he studied the smoke contemplatively for several moments as it curled upward. His manner was that of one not entirely dissatisfied with the trend events had taken. He had been fully prepared to note his own name among those of the various city officials indicted by the federal grand jury, and he was more or less astonished, not to say agreeably surprised, that the thing he had steeled himself to face had not, after all, come to pass.

His own name was only mentioned in a casual way; it did not appear among the lists

of those against whom indictments had been returned. Nor was any mention whatever made of McPherson's confession just prior to his death. For some reason or other the statement had evidently not reached the grand jury at all. That being the case, he could see only one reason to account for it—Bradley must have decided to accept his proposition. Otherwise indictments would have undoubtedly been returned against both himself and his fellow conspirators.

Wherefore the necessity presented itself of making good his offer to Bradley at the earliest moment in order to eliminate any possibility of his changing his mind at the eleventh hour.

"One hundred thousand dollars if McPherson's confession does not find its way into the hands of the federal grand jury," was the offer he had made.

It was a goodly sum, but undoubtedly worth it. He himself did not have the amount, but he knew where he could lay his hands upon it in short order. He could, in fact, raise fifty thousand of it in cash within twenty-four hours. Bradley would probably be satisfied with that much now and the rest of it a few days later.

Dorgan would be good for five thousand; Lane ought to come through with twenty-five hundred; and Dan Miller was good for another five thousand at least. In fact, he would make them come across or there would be no more protection for their various gambling joints.

He began to figure up the amount he thought he could raise immediately, but finding it too difficult to carry the totals in his head, he took a pencil from his pocket and looked around for a bit of paper to scribble upon. There was no pad handy on the desk, and noting a folded sheet of paper laying on the floor near by, he picked it up, naturally presuming that it had been intended for the wastebasket. Had he taken the trouble to unfold it and pursue its contents, he would very likely have experienced the greatest surprise of his life. Instead of doing so, however, he began to scribble upon the back of it, setting down the various amounts as they occurred to him. The total finally amounted to forty-six thousand dollars. He and Klein could put up the remaining four thousand and give Bradley an even half of the full amount of the bribe some time on the morrow.

The best course of action to pursue for the present, he concluded, would be to look Bradley up and let him know that he intended to make good the offer right away. Bradley, having played his part, was probably awaiting for some such word as this, and it would be advisable, he thought, to get in touch with him immediately.

At any rate, this was the way John L. Schrader reasoned the matter out. Just how far he came from hitting upon the real truth the reader already knows. And he himself was destined to learn the same thing in the not far distant future.

Having decided upon this plan of action, the mayor slipped the paper he had been scribbling upon into his coat pocket, and forthwith took his departure.

It was five-and-twenty minutes before the hour of one when Bradley, returning from his visit to the district attorney, was more or less surprised to find so eminent a personage as Mayor Schrader awaiting him in his study. The mayor's first words, however, explained the purpose of his visit.

"Well, Bradley, I'm mighty glad to see you decided to accept our offer." Being sure of himself, the mayor did not deem it necessary to beat about the bush.

It had never occurred to Bradley that the failure of the grand jury to return indictments against either Schrader or Klein might possibly lead those two gentlemen to believe that he had accepted their proposition. Evidently, however, that was exactly what had happened, and he found the thought somewhat amusing. It might be well perhaps to lead the mayor on a bit.

"Well, you have reason to be glad, haven't you?" he asked, with the faintest note of sarcasm.

Schrader, however, did not appear to notice it. The question he ignored entirely.

"I am here, Bradley, to let you know that we will have fifty thousand dollars of the money ready for you by this time to-morrow," he promised. "The remainder we will give you in a very few days. The entire payment, of course, will be made in cash."

"That's a whole lot of money, Mr. Mayor. Rather hit your bank account a rap, won't it?"

"Well, not exactly," Schrader admitted, smiling. "I have a few friends, you know."

Bradley selected a cigarette from a carton on his desk and lit it.

"Pays sometimes to have friends, doesn't it?" he asked suggestively. "They must think a lot of you. A hundred thousand is a pretty neat sum."

"They think a lot of my administration, anyhow," the mayor laughed. "However, as long as the money is forthcoming, the source of it doesn't make a great deal of difference, does it?"

"No, I don't suppose so," Bradley confessed.

"Well, let's get down to business then," he suggested. From his coat pocket the mayor drew forth the folded slip of paper on the back of which he had set down the various amounts he was quite certain he could raise within the next twenty-four hours. These figures he inspected carefully for a few moments. "I don't think we'll have any trouble raising fifty thousand of the amount by this time tomorrow, Bradley," he continued finally. "Suppose you suggest a meeting place, and I'll arrange to see you there at whatever hour you wish."

Bradley, concluding that nothing was to be gained by prolonging the deception, decided to end it.

"Mr. Mayor," he said, leaning further across his desk, "because McPherson's statement has not as yet reached the grand jury you have taken it for granted that you had succeeded in buying me off. Permit me to advise you of the fact that you were never more mistaken in your life."

The mayor regarded him for a moment in speechless astonishment.

"Why, I—I thought——"

"Yes, I know you did," Bradley interrupted. "I let you keep on thinking so for a few minutes because I thought I might learn something of interest. For good and sufficient reasons we have not as yet seen fit to offer McPherson's statement as evidence. It will, however, be presented to the grand jury at the proper time." Bradley wished that he might really have felt the confidence that he put into the words.

Schrader's face had suddenly turned to an ashen-like pallor, and the corners of his mouth were twitching nervously as he rose slowly to his feet.

"So that's it, eh?" he said, keeping his voice steady with an apparent effort. "Very well, the time may come, Bradley, when you will have cause to regret it. Don't forget what happened to——"

He stopped suddenly as Bradley leaped to his feet and strode quickly toward him around the desk.

"Listen here, Schrader!" Bradley ordered. "Don't threaten me or I'll take you by the nape of the neck and throw you downstairs. Do you understand?"

The mayor, regarding the young Hercules who towered above him, understood. In fact, he admitted as much. He glanced once more at the column of figures he had scribbled on the back of the folded sheet of paper he still held in his hand, whereupon he crumpled it up and tossed it into Bradley's waste-basket. He had no further use for it.

"Under the circumstances, Bradley, I forgot myself for the moment," he apologized with as much dignity as he could muster. "I—I was rather upset——"

"All right, forget about it," Bradley interrupted, as he picked up the mayor's hat from his desk and handed it to him.

The suggestion being quite apparent, the mayor acted upon it. Accepting the hat, he strode quickly to the door, and a moment later had closed it behind him.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BRADLEY, when the mayor had departed, stood for several moments by one of the windows, gazing thoughtfully into the street. Finally, not finding his thoughts particularly pleasant to dwell upon, he came back again to his desk and began to read, in a special edition of the *Journal* he had secured a short while before, a story of the grand jury's partial report of its findings. Presently he was interrupted by the insistent ringing of his telephone. He took down the receiver.

"Mr. Bradley speaking."

"Bradley, this is Lamb," came the voice of the district attorney from the other end of the wire. "Anything doing yet?"

"Not a thing, Mr. Lamb," Bradley answered. "I called again at the newspaper offices after I left you this morning, but there were no replies to the advertisement. I'll telephone them again shortly, but I have almost given up hope myself now."

"Yes, I guess it's a mighty slim chance," the district attorney agreed. "However, if anything should happen call me up right away. I was talking with Mr. Anderson a few moments ago—he's foreman of the jury, you know—and I told him exactly what McPherson had said in his statement. Of course they can't return the indictments on the strength of that, but he said if the statement itself was offered as evidence they would undoubtedly do so. Call me up anyhow, Bradley, about 2:30, will you?"

Assuring the district attorney that he would do so, Bradley hung the receiver back upon its hook.

For a few moments he continued reading the story in the *Journal*, but finding that it only served to remind him of his failure, he presently threw the paper aside in disgust.

Lighting a cigarette, he rose to his feet, and as he walked around the desk he happened to stumble over the waste-basket. Not being in an entirely pleasant frame of mind he gave the thing a vicious kick that sent it spinning into a corner of the room. It was, in fact, quite a natural thing for a man to do under the circumstances. The waste-basket, bringing up against the wall, toppled over and emptied most of its contents on the floor.

Whereupon Fate, having shuffled the cards and dealt them according to its liking, guided Bradley's footsteps to a bathroom in the rear of the apartment. He removed his collar and tie and began to lather his face preparatory to shaving.

Cato, Bradley's Japanese servant, having occasion to enter the study a few moments later, noted the contents of the waste-basket strewn over the floor. He proceeded to gather up the crumpled bits of paper, stuffing them back again into the basket.

Presently he came upon a folded sheet of paper on the back of which, he noted, some one had scribbled a column of several figures. Thinking that perhaps this might be something his master had not intended to throw away, he unfolded the paper and glanced at its contents. Cato was possessed of a greater degree of intelligence than the average Oriental servant, and having read the first paragraph, he concluded that the paper had certainly not been intended for the waste basket. Whereupon he laid it on Bradley's desk, returned the basket to its customary place, and went on about his business.

When Bradley had finished shaving he returned again to his study and spent several minutes glancing through the news columns of the *Journal*. The clock on his mantelpiece denoted the hour of one-thirty before he finished reading and threw the paper aside. He came over then and sat down before his desk, intending to telephone the various newspapers again, in the hope that his advertisement might have produced something at the eleventh hour.

Holding the receiver to his ear, he drummed the fingers of his other hand lightly for a moment upon the surface of his desk. His fingers coming in contact with the sheet of paper Cato had placed there, he toyed absently with a corner of it. Finally he happened to glance downward, and as his eye took in the first line typed in capital letters the receiver slipped from his grasp, and he stared, unbelieving. Recovering quickly from his surprise, he hung up the receiver and began rapidly to read:

"To Whosoever It May Concern:

"In witness of my signature hereto appended, I, James E. McPherson, being of sound mind and sound body, do hereby swear that this statement is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God."

Bradley ran his eye hurriedly down the page and took in the signature in black ink at the bottom of it. He did not stop to find out how this miracle had come to pass; there would be time enough to investigate that later. The thing to do now was to telephone the district attorney and let him know that McPherson's confession had been found at last.

Whereupon Robert J. Bradley took down the receiver of his phone and called for Main 1,000.

Female Detectives

A CRIMINAL who will shortly appear before a judge at the Old Bailie had been successfully tracked by a female detective, and apprehended by means of the information she obtained, when three male detectives employed in the case had failed to catch him. I obtained an introduction to a detective office where female detectives are a specialty, and gained some information of a useful sort.

"Female detectives," said the gentleman to whom I was introduced, "are of two or three different kinds. At first I started with only one, and advertised that her services were available. It was astonishing how soon I had applications for employment from women of almost all classes. I actually received two letters from ladies of title, who said that, supposing their names could be kept absolutely secret, they could be of great assistance to me —for a consideration—and I have since utilized the services of both of them, with considerable profit to myself and clients. And I have at this moment eight or ten small shop-keeping women as occasional detectives, who are exceedingly useful; so that you see I treat with all grades."

"But what are the shop-keeping women useful for?"

"Well, I'll tell you of a little incident that occurred only a very few months ago. A gentleman came to me and consulted me about some very curious robberies that had occurred in his house. He had a mania for book collecting, and had lost, strange to say, not only one or two rare editions, but title-pages, and leaves of volumes which had not been taken away bodily. His servants had been in his house for years, and now and then only had he engaged outside help, but the robbery of all that was most valuable in his library went on, and he did not know how to stop it.

"I at once told him that he must let me put a couple of occasional servants in the house when he next gave a dinner party, and that he must let this man and woman come to help for a few times at least. He agreed, and I sent for a grocer's young wife who was in my pay, and told her what I wanted her to do. Her husband must wait at table; she must be useful in the kitchen and keep her eyes open. They went to the party, but the woman found out nothing; and a few days afterward I got her a sort of temporary engagement in the house to do some odd jobs that were wanted, so that she stayed there a week.

"One evening I got a note from her by a cabman, and, going up to the house, I found she had seen a man-servant in the library, and watched him abstract some leaves from a book in one of the cases. I waited outside the house till past midnight, and was almost giving the matter up, for that time at least, when long after the family had retired to rest an old gentleman came up in a hansom, got down a little distance from the house, gently tapped the area paling, and was at once answered by the man-servant, who handed him the leaves after some little confabulation. I need not trouble you with more of that incident. The old gentleman turned out to be a man of considerable means.

"I have sent female agents as traveling companions with ladies. I have introduced them as seamstresses into families; I have sent them to the reading rooms of the British Museum, and over and over again I have employed them to open up correspondence with people whom it was necessary to know something important about. But I once hit upon a regular Tartar, who not only gave away my secret to the man whom she was employed to catch, but married him, and got away to South America with him and the whole of the property which I intended to make him disgorge.

"Some time ago a pawnbroker in the north of London was suspected of doing a very irregular kind of business. The police, however, did not care to take any trouble about him, and it was at the instance of one or two respectable householders in the neighborhood

that I was called in. Little things of value were missed over and over again; servants were suspected, and one or two declared that they had pawned the articles at the shop of this man, but when asked for the tickets which represented the articles, they had always said that they had received none. Despite all the regulations environing pawnbrokers, they had simply sold the things outright to him without getting acknowledgments of any sort.

"To catch him was not at all an easy matter. I had to get not only a person to pawn some articles, but a receiver. The latter I at length found in the person of an old man, who had previously had some dealings with this same pawnbroker, and I instructed him to let the suspected man know that he wanted to buy a silver-backed toilet-brush of a certain kind, if he could get it. On his reporting that he had done so to me, I was ready to send exactly such a brush by the hands of a 'decoy duck' to the pawnbroker. Dressed as a domestic servant, she ran into his shop one evening just as he was closing, and offering the brush, said she wanted as much as he could let her have on it. He inquired whether she wanted to redeem it again, and she said 'No,' whereupon he put down eleven shillings upon the counter—or about one-sixth of its value. The girl took the money, but no ticket, and three or four days afterwards I had received the brush from my friend, the pawnbroker had sold his business, and the neighborhood was rid of a thorough-paced scoundrel.

"I regret to say that I was once victimized into assisting an undoubtedly unfaithful wife to hamper and checkmate an easy-going, ill-used husband. One day I was sitting here, when a lady, apparently in great distress of mind, called upon me, and asked if I could assist her. Her husband, she said, was in the habit of going up the river a great deal, and she suspected he forgot her while he was on these excursions. Could I find this out and furnish her with proofs? She suggested that if I could send some passably good-looking girl to a popular river-side resort which she named, and let her endeavor to attract his attention, she might speedily find out whether these suspicions were correct. I will not detail our preliminary steps; suffice it to say that I employed a pretty dark-eyed girl—he liked dark girls, his wife told me—to go to the hotel he frequented.

"How far she threw herself in his way I do not know, but it is certain that he took her for a row in his boat, wrote her two or three letters, gave her a dinner in London, and generally compromised himself sufficiently for his wife—whom he had reason to suspect, with perfect truth, as it turned out—so completely to turn the tables on him, that he had to surrender at discretion, and forego some proceedings in the divorce court, which he had contemplated taking. It was not, however, till after I had furnished the lady with all the details of my 'decoy duck' reports that I found out exactly what I had been doing."

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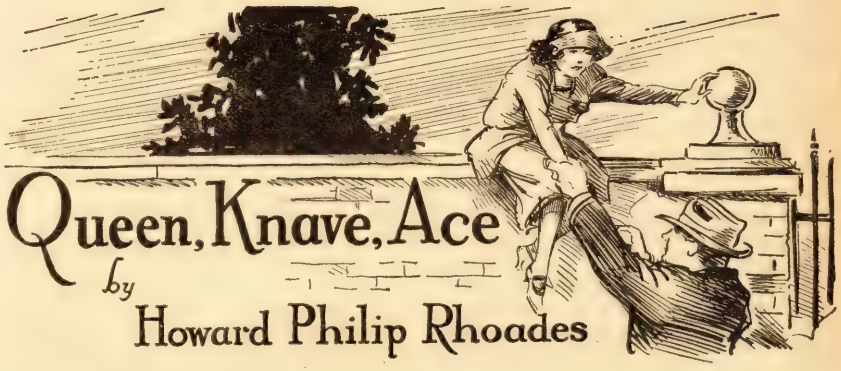
BAR SILVER DUG UP ON FARM

THE police and the sheriff's office are trying to solve the problem of how bar silver worth between $3,500 and $4,000 came to be buried on the farm of Lewis Salmon, on the east bank of the Niagara River, near Lasalle, N. Y.

Salmon called on a Buffalo jeweler one day with a sample of the metal, which he had turned up with a spade. Learning that it was real bullion, Salmon reported his find to the police, and accompanied by an officer, returned to the farm.

They dug up 44 bars, each six inches long, three inches wide and half an inch thick. The soil showed no signs that the bullion had been recently buried. The bars were found at various depths from one to four feet below the surface of the ground.



Queen, Knave, Ace

by

Howard Philip Rhoades

OTIS BELFORD, who was in search of a fortune-teller, slowed his pace and looked up cautiously. Yes, there it was—a curious, yellowish green, different from the others in the block—on the third floor, one-quarter drawn!

He ascended the steps to one of the old-fashioned brown-stone houses which stood in this block not far from the southeast corner of Central Park. It was like dozens of others, four stories high, the reddish tint of its stone darkened by age and the blackness of a threatened early summer shower. But there was the yellowish green curtain, one-fourth drawn, on the third floor.

Quickly he took in the names on either side. Yes, there was the commonplace and unsuspicious cognomen, "J. Block." He pressed the button—one long, one short; one long, one short. There was an answering click. He entered.

Two flights up through dim passages. Then a door with the name, "J. Block," again. He rang and a maid appeared. "I was sent by a friend of Mrs. Block," said Otis Bedford. The maid showed him in.

"You wished to consult Mrs. Block professionally?" the maid asked.

Belford nodded and she withdrew. Then she beckoned from a door leading to the rear. Belford went through a dark passage. Then it was as if he had stepped into another world, one surcharged with the aroma of burning incense and filled with the twinkling stars of a vast firmament. Rather it was a universe. For by some trick of the scenic artist there spread backward across this very large room a cloth of midnight blue, upon which burned with cold white radiance specks like thousands of stars of different magnitudes. Belford had the sense of standing among the stars in the hugeness and mystery of some strange world where the planets hung low and whispered their secrets one to another.

Suddenly a single white ray fell upon a curiously carved seat near the centre of the room. There sat a tall, dark woman of classic features and glistening eyes. She pointed to the empty seat opposite. It was a chair over which a gaping griffin frowned while its claws formed the sharply fashioned arms.

As Belford drew near the seeress observed him closely. He was a tall young man, dressed with quiet elegance, whose clear gray eyes gazed into the dark ones of the fortune-teller directly and pleasantly.

"You would have me unravel the skein of the future?" she asked in a dreamy, far-away voice.

He nodded. She drew from the folds of

the bizarrely decorated silk robe which enveloped her a most curious pack of playing cards. Each card in the pack was an individual, given distinctive attributes by the artist. The seeress shuffled them with long, thin, swiftly-moving fingers.

As she did so she said: "I am Zeeda, daughter of gypsies in whose veins flowed the blood of the Egyptians, the Arabs and the Greeks. I was born in Granada under the confluence of the most far-seeing stars drawn together since the birth of Alexander the Great. Hard days are upon us. We are misunderstood. We are persecuted. We hide under assumed names to practice an art older than the world. But"—her mystic eyes took on a very practical look—"we foretell the future more completely, more thoroughly than ever!"

She tossed the cards face downward on the table. Belford noted it was a stony, irregular surface made ghastly here and there by the protrusion of pieces of human bones. Madame Zeeda held out a broad fold of finest linen. It was heavy with some perfume which strangely made him think of the pyramids with a soft night wind blowing and great stars shining down.

"Over the eyes," she commanded. He placed it so. Unquestionably it cut off all sight. He nodded and she said: "Bind up my eyes."

He did so. In her dreamy far-off tones she said: "I shuffle well the cards that the elements of your fate may evade me if they can. Now I scatter them upon the table in which is mingled the bones of seven fools and seven wise men!"

With weird incantations, of which he could make nothing, she circled her long narrow hands over the cards. Now, with both hands, she raised one from the extreme right, now one from the extreme left. Now one from the centre. These three, still face downward, she handed to Belford.

"Hold them tightly!" she cried. Then, with her hands a moment upon her head, groaning as if the effort caused acute pain, she scattered all the rest of the cards to the floor. The white band was off and Madame Zeeda's glistening eyes were staring at Belford as if she had been awakened from a hideous nightmare.

"What do the stars decree?" she cried, eagerly catching the cards from his hand. She laid them face upward on the table. There was the queen of hearts with a face of serious sweetness and pale blond hair, the dark-browed jack of clubs and the ace of spades. These cards, like others in the curious deck, had an individuality which fascinated, and Belford eagerly awaited an interpretation.

"This queen," explained Zeeda, "she is your fortune. You will meet her soon. This knave, he is the evil which threatens. He will try to take her from you. This ace of spades is the instrument by which you will triumph."

"But the ace—what does it signify? What is it?"

She shrugged. "It is an ace of spades," she said sharply. Then she dropped back as if exhausted.

"There is no more?" he asked.

She shook her head. "Others might tell a thousand details," she said. "All lies! I have given the central conflicting forces of your life—and the key."

"This will surely happen?"

"The stars, which speak through the mystic cards, do not lie."

"Thank you," said Belford politely. "What is the fee?"

"Ten dollars. But would you not like a charm—an amulet?" He shook his head, paid her and departed. Early that afternoon he was waiting outside a door marked "Department of Detectives" and, in smaller letters, "chief."

When he was about to enter he felt a hand on his arm.

"Belford," said a large man who had come from another office, "you're just the man I want. I've a peculiar case here that might interest you. Come in while I tell the chief."

Belford saw that Corrigan, the lieutenant, was accompanied by a girl—a girl whose slim figure was exquisitely tailored in black, whose small, delicately moulded head was covered with a shapely black hat, and through the meshes of whose black veil shone out large luminous blue eyes.

Belford followed Corrigan and the girl into the chief's office. As the keen eyes of the gray-haired head of the department rested on the group, Corrigan told the story.

"This is Miss Georgia Deering, Chief," he said. "The daughter of the late George Deering, the Wall Street man. Miss Deering has a wire from her father's attorney which she doesn't like. John L. Patton, the lawyer, is engaged in clearing up her father's affairs. He is West buying some valuable mining stock. For this Miss Deering expects to pay, but not as per this wire."

He tossed a telegram on the chief's desk. The chief read aloud:

"MISS GEORGIA DEERING: Please draw $50,000 cash and meet me at Southslope at nine this (Thursday) evening. Have Deep Gulch, but owner, as per letter, wants cash. Think better humor him. Coming via Boston.

"J. L. PATTON."

"Sent from Chicago, eh? What was this letter mentioned, Miss Deering," asked the chief.

Georgia Deering's voice, heard now for the first time by Belford, was low and clear as she said: "Mr. Patton wrote that the man from whom he bought the stock is coming with him and sailing for Europe Saturday; that he's a hard-working Western character and rather distrustful of anything save cash. The part that worries me is going out to Southslope, my father's Westchester country place. I had expected to pay at Mr. Patton's office or my apartment in the city."

"Is there any one at the country place?"

"Only a lame old caretaker. I told Mr. Patton I expected to go to Southslope before he got back. But the shock of losing my father only two months ago has been such that I've not felt able. I thought I wrote and told him that."

"What sort of man is Mr. Patton, Miss Deering?"

"He's had full charge of my father's legal affairs for years. Not long before his death I heard father say he wished Mr. Patton wouldn't drink quite so much. As I recall, father's chief complaint was that it made Mr. Patton too loud—too talkative. I never heard his honesty questioned."

"What sort of looking man is he?"

"Large, dark, with brown eyes and dark hair. A man of fifty-five or so."

"There is a sort of man," mused the chief, "who is square with men. But give him a chance at a woman—— I'm glad you came, Miss Deering. I share your suspicions. But here's what we're up against. There are so many crimes committed inside the city that I hesitate to send men outside. Here's a solution: Just wait safely at home. If Patton comes and doesn't find you at the country place he'll communicate. Then tell him to come to the city in the morning and you'll pay."

"On the other hand, Chief, if you'll pardon me," said Corrigan, "one of these within-the-law crooks is forty times as dangerous as the petit larceny kind. Think of the future jobs we may head off if we catch this fellow with the goods. Seeing Belford gave me an idea. He's the man who rounded up Lane, the stock swindler, and sent 'Gentleman Norton' up the river. Handling such fellows is his long suit. Why not let him take a whirl?"

As the chief glanced across at the tall young man with his quiet elegance and clear gray eyes, it was the clean, efficient record which Belford had made in the department that swung the balance. Son of a noted South American adventurer-financier, Belford had inherited a great share of his father's love of excitement and a very small share of the now vanished fortune—just enough to make him independent of departmental politics, hence able to concentrate on work.

"You may be right, Corrigan," said the chief. "At least we can try. Mowery, Belford's usual partner, is tied up for the week. But if he cares to get some one else or go alone——"

Belford was motionless as he looked across the chief's desk at Georgia Deering. A significant detail which hitherto had escaped now held him fascinated. From beneath the girls' black hat dropped a graceful wisp of golden hair. The serious sweetness of her face had been puzzling him. But the wisp of hair made it all clear. The hair was gold—pale gold, the hair of the queen of hearts!

"If he cares to go," repeated the chief.

This time Belford heard. "I certainly should," he said. "If Miss Deering will tell me more about the case we will be waiting at Southslope at nine!"

Miss Deering did tell him more as they dined beside the open window of a roadhouse north of New York, overlooking the Hudson. The showery early summer day was closing in a glorious sunset. But as Georgia Deering spoke to the young detective, strangely enough she talked more of herself than of the case. For Otis Belford was a revelation to her.

First she begged the facts about being a detective from him. These he told with such quiet conviction that she found herself letting out to him more and more. Books, plays, travel, the famous resorts of the world, all were touched upon, and she was entranced at finding him not only such a man of action as she long had dreamed of, but her equal in every intellectual and social accomplishment.

Suddenly, two hours later, they emerged from their mutual fascination. "Why!" she cried, consulting her watch, "it's after eight!"

"Which means," he said, "we must be pursuing serious things, including Mr. Patton!"

In her little roadster they climbed into the hills of Westchester. After half an hour they turned into a narrow, private road, and at last stopped just inside the estate of a neighbor.

"This is the rear of Southslope," she said, pointing up a wooded hill. They paused before a rustic, vine-clad gate. "It's locked," she said, "and I haven't a key."

"Never mind," said Belford and with a quick leap was atop the stone wall surrounding the estate. "Come!" he said and took her hands. A jump and she was up beside him, his strong right arm around her. Then he was down and she followed, the slim form and beautiful serious face close to his for a moment as he caught her.

His hand upon her arm, they climbed a long flight of steps covered throughout its length by a thick vine, which was in bloom and which shed upon them a soft sweet fragrance. Through the occasional openings Belford caught the thin crescent of a rising moon. He had read of such nights, of such girls, of such adventures. But in all his world roamings never had he met them together before.

There was a small summer house near the crest of the hill. "Wait here," she said; "I'll send old Carey to his lodge. He wouldn't be of help."

Just beyond was the low-lying form of a large country house. There were lights in several rooms. Belford waited, watching the rising moon, the soft night wind pouring down the heavy fragrance of the flowering vine. He had met the queen. Now for the knave!

Georgia Deering was back. "Carey's gone now," she said. "I'll await Mr. Patton in the living-room. There's a room opening off where you can remain in the dark and watch. If everything is all right please withdraw by this rear door after reasonable time. I don't care to have Mr. Patton know he's being watched should we be wrong in our suspicions. Neither would I want to introduce you as a friend for fear that would influence his actions. I, of course, might have wired him back. But if he has wrong intentions, that would have warned him. I'm eager to know his character as much as anything, and want him to act just as he had planned to act if he found me here alone."

"Then I may not see you again this evening," said Belford. "Please let me express my pleasure and the hope——"

She took his hand. "I've enjoyed it, too," she said, "very much indeed. Surely we'll meet again soon. Now let me show you the house."

There was an enormous room at the front with three doors. One was the front entrance. The other two opened into other rooms. At one end was a broad stairway leading to the second floor. "From this room," she said, pointing, "you can see and hear most that goes on in the living-room."

"Excellent," he said. "Now I wonder if I may have a drink. That ride seems to have made me thirsty."

"Certainly," she said. "Be seated and I'll get it."

He took a precaution or two while she was gone. Then they smiled across tall glasses of cool spring water. He was hesitating, about to speak, when they heard the roar of a car from the road.

"Quick!" she cried. "Into the room."

There was a moment with Georgia Deering sitting beneath the great lamp, her hair like pale gold, and Belford in the darkness of the next room tensing his muscles and leaning forward. Then a step outside and a ring.

Belford, his heart accelerated, made sure his

automatic was in place. Then a slight sound as the door opened, and he heard a man's voice.

A peculiar look upon her face—whether of fear, consternation or merely wonder he could not tell—the girl ushered in a tall, well-dressed middle-aged man. She turned back to him as he asked a question. Belford could not distinguish her answer, but her gesture seemed to indicate that she was alone. This time, as the man spoke, a note of petulant command seemed to have crept into his voice. Miss Deering indicated a black bag which lay upon the table. He had asked her about the money. Belford pressed forward in the dark of the next room, his heart beating swiftly.

Suddenly the man began a circuit of the room. As he neared the half-opened door just beyond which the detective crouched, Belford pressed up to the limit of the shadows. He longed to peer around the corner into the visitor's face, but dared not. Suddenly he was in inky darkness, the slam of a door ringing in his ears. The man on the other side had forcibly closed the door. Moreover, Belford heard a key turn in the lock.

He was about to hurl himself against the door. But he thought better of it. Perhaps the man didn't know of his presence. Why notify him? He could go into the other room opening into the living-room and make it a listening post. Rapidly he moved in that direction. He was close to the door a moment later when suddenly there came a second bang, and again complete darkness.

More—the cry of a woman! Georgia Deering was in trouble. At the knave's mercy was the queen. Madly Belford tore back through the house to the rear door. Then, guarding himself as best he could against possible allies of the man inside, he stole quickly forward to the broad front portico. Coming out of the shadow of a tall hedge, he stole to one of a series of latticed windows looking in upon the big living-room.

Every light save one had been extinguished. Belford strained forward expectantly. The man inside, his face distorted, his dark eyes gleaming hungrily, was just turning from the black bag which lay at his feet to something in the edge of the circle of light cast by the remaining lamp. Belford could see now that it was the crumpled form of Miss Deering which lay limply across a chair. With a look which made the detective shudder the man inside caught up the slim form of the pale, unconscious girl, and with her clasped tightly against his stalwart body, turned out the last lamp and faded into the darkness.

Frenzied, Belford tried window after window. All were locked as well as the front door. The criss-crossed wooden pieces made smashing out a pane large enough to enter impossible. Belford was rushing off through the hedge and across a flower bed when something suddenly clattered beneath his feet. He felt something fly up—a wooden handle. He caught it in his hands. Below was a metal blade, broad, strong. A spade—a garden spade. Instantly it flashed upon him: literally the one, the ace of spades!

He turned swiftly back. On one of his earlier cases he had been called upon to investigate the crimes of a certain class of crude burglars who use shovels and spades to force windows in lieu of the usual jimmy. A second later Belford had "the ace of spades" in place beneath the lower sash of one of the windows and was bearing down with all his might. There was a tightening, a strain, then a groaning wrench as the lock gave way and the window shot up.

He crawled in cautiously. Evidently the man had heard the window open, for there was not a sound. At last above came a guarded footfall. Belford stole swiftly in that direction. Before him were the stairs. He crept up, clinging close to the side to minimize creaking. Ahead in the darkness he heard a faint sound like the swish of cloth and as if a weight had been laid upon the floor. The man had laid down the girl and was preparing for action. Belford rushed on, his hands outstretched to guard against obstacles.

Suddenly the dark was pierced by a spot of flame. Belford dropped back into a doorway. From this shelter he returned the fire, and then waited. Ahead went steps. Had the other, under the cover of noise, retreated to the first floor? Was he now below escaping? Spurred by this thought, Belford stole on again through the darkness.

Suddenly his foot struck something. He started, then bent over tenderly. It was Geor-

gia Deering, unconscious. Bringing her back would not be difficult. But first to catch the man ahead! Carefully he started down another flight of stairs just beyond. On the landing he paused to listen. Then of a sudden two arms closed upon him from the rear. They were strong arms, Belford realized, the arms of no mean opponent.

Intuitively the detective resorted to an old trick of the wrestling mat. Bending swiftly forward almost to the floor, then lunging back suddenly he sent the other man catapulting over his head and down the stairs. Before he could reach him the other man was up, however, and raced into the living-room. At the far end of it faintly he was outlined against a window which he was in the act of opening when Belford fired, aiming at his legs.

The other man dropped behind some large piece of furniture, and red flares and sharp reports marked his return fire. Cautiously Belford approached. Two small chairs he encountered on the way gave him an idea. He dragged them along, and presently behind a davenport massed several small pieces. One more shot he fired to determine his adversary's position. As return fire came Belford swiftly shifted to the other end of his fort, and from this position showered upon the other man a fierce rain of small chairs and other bits he had gathered.

As the last one was thrown the detective followed it like a shot, planning to find his opponent unnerved and unprepared. Fortune favored Belford. The first thing he came upon in the darkness was the gun arm of his opponent, which he twisted and nearly broke. The gun fell to the floor as the pair grappled, gasping, panting, pulling over furniture, now one on top, now the other. The man with whom the detective was struggling was almost a match for Belford physically. It would not do to take chances. Closer and closer to his throat Belford found the other's fingers creeping. So he decided the next time he came up he would free one hand and bring matters to a quick climax.

For a long time, it seemed, he was pinned down. Then, by a lucky twist of the leg, he came on top. Freeing his right hand, he smashed away in the darkness in the general direction of the other's face. Feeling that the fight was near an end, the other man threw his last remaining bit of strength into an effort to sit up just as Belford aimed his hardest blow straight at his face. The detective's fist caught the other man low, squarely on the chin, and he sank with a moan to the floor.

His opponent motionless and still, Belford lit a match, then a lamp. Hastily drawing all shades, to hide from possible allies of his late foe outside the results of the battle, he looked for something like a rope. A bit of hanging sufficed. He tied the man, who had begun to moan and try to get up, securely. Then he leaped up the stairs and brought down the limp form of the girl.

The application of cold water spurred her returning senses. The blue eyes opened. "It's all right," he whispered as she clung to him.

As he laid her back gently there was a ring. His automatic in hand, Belford turned on the lights outside, then peered through a blind. With a murmur of relief he opened the door. Two motor policemen, who regarded his drawn revolver suspiciously, entered.

He displayed his badge and explained briefly. One of the men turned back and called: "All right, sir. Come along." An elderly gentleman with an anxious face appeared.

"Mr. Belford from headquarters," introduced the policeman, "Mr. Patton."

"Patton!" cried Belford.

"Yes," said the lawyer, "I just got into town, and Miss Deering's maid told me of this wire and her trip out here. I feared——"

"Distinguished company, Mr. Belford," said the policeman, who had been looking at the man on the floor; "Mr. McCracken, a Brooklyn bootlegger. I saw him fined last month."

"I understand," said Mr. Patton, "that Miss Deering brought some money——"

Belford smilingly pushed a crumple of paper at his feet. "Here's what our friend got from the bag when he expected money," he explained. "At the last moment I got cold feet and decided letting anybody get close to that much money with only one man on guard was too dangerous. So I slipped the money in that vase over there, intending to go around front and tell Miss Deering, if she really needed it. Fixed that while she was getting me a drink."

Patton appeared nervous. "Don't you wish

to prepare yourself to return to the city, my dear," he said to the girl. As she withdrew he pulled Belford aside. "You've got to cover me on this," he said, "and I swear it'll never happen again. The moment that policeman said 'bootlegger' I saw through it all. I dined, day before yesterday, in a Chicago club with a very intimate friend. I'm afraid I had a little too much to drink. I told him of this stock deal, all about Miss Deering, of whom I think the world, perhaps a lot of other things. A waiter who, my friend says, is the club's chief go-between with the bootleggers, hung around constantly under the guise of giving service. He must have wired friends here who pieced out the New York end, and started after big stakes."

Later as Belford bade Miss Deering good-night at her Park avenue apartment, she said: "You'll lunch here with me to-morrow?" He smiled happily as he looked into the luminous blue eyes and held the soft white hand of his queen of hearts.

But before he filled the engagement next day he stopped in at a brown-stone house on the third floor of which was a yellowish green blind, one-quarter drawn.

"Madame Zeeda," he said as he stood once more among the stars, "I met the queen of whom you spoke. Also the knave and the ace. But the queen is very rich and very beautiful. Tell me, do you think she will marry me?"

"I don't know; I can't tell, I'm sure," said the seeress.

It was a confession of ignorance which irritated Belford.

"Listen, Zeeda," he said with spirit. "Yesterday the chief of detectives sent me here to get the evidence to send you to prison. The police have the report that you falsify. You told my fortune, but you told it correctly. I couldn't convict you on that. The chief forgot to ask me for a report yesterday. But he won't to-day. When he does I'll have to hurry back here. Then you will be gone; get me? Now for playing fair with you and making this unofficial visit, I think you might answer that question."

"For your warning, thanks," she said. "But indeed I cannot answer. My dear young man, you ask me *what a woman will do*, and I am only a fortune-teller! But there is a way to find out."

Belford leaned forward eagerly. "How?" he queried.

"Ask her!"

The detective smiled. "Thanks, Zeeda," he said. "I will," and was gone.

Send us a one-cent stamp to cover postage, and we will mail you a copy of "Moving Picture Stories."

THE SWORD TRICK

THAT some unfortunate beings have to make a living by swallowing swords cannot be wondered at in these days of cut-throat competition.

A more thoroughly uninviting occupation could hardly be thought of, although an expert can doubtless make a very good thing of it from a pecuniary point of view.

Most people who have seen the sword trick performed on the stage think they know how it is done. But they don't, as a rule, for all that.

The disappearance of the blade down the conjurer's throat is no mere illusion. The sword actually does go down the man's insides in nine cases out of ten.

The sword is, of course, not really sharp, or it would be impossible to pass it through the mouth; but undoubtedly it is of genuine metal.

Every one knows how peculiarly sensitive are the back parts of the mouth, and how they will instinctively rebel at the very suggestion of any contact with solid bodies. This, of course, makes the trick all the more wonderful. It is only by dint of the most untiring practice that they can become hardened.

Needless to say, the first time the blade is introduced into the pharynx, the torture is almost unbearable; but each insertion becomes less difficult, and after sufficient time the disagreeable sensations can be completely overcome.

The Eskimo Dog

THE Eskimo dog from his birth to his death, which in many instances is a violent one, never knows the luxury of shelter or a bed. He spends his existence outdoors, and appears to be far more comfortable in winter than in summer. The pups, when hardly able to toddle, instinctively show an ambition to run with sleighs and join with their treble squeals the enthusiastic chorus of howls with which the Eskimo dog invariably greets the first fall of snow. I may say here that the Eskimo dog never barks. The ambition of the young dogs is soon taken advantage of by the Eskimos. The little fellows are hitched to sleds in company with full-grown dogs, and to prevent them from being run over they are tied by the neck to the tow-line, so that when the run starts out they are compelled to keep up or be dragged by the team. This simple though brutal method of training is very effective, and after one or two runs the young dog understands what is wanted of him. Even before he is full grown he is thoroughly conversant with his duties.

The much-referred-to intelligence of the Scotch collie, which is a sort of first cousin of the Eskimo dog, is undoubtedly even surpassed by that of his Arctic relative. Some of the characteristics of the Eskimo draft dog are most incredible. Any one who has observed them finds it difficult to deny him the credit of reasoning power. I had one dog which persisted in feigning lameness or sickness in order to shirk duty. He would suddenly limp dreadfully, and look back at his driver with a most pitiable expression. He succeeded several times in arousing my sympathy and being released from the harness until one of my Eskimos assured me that it was all trickery. After that I punished him whenever he tried to shirk, and in every case it would be days before any sign of lameness would be seen. He had a trick of slipping out of the harness, in which he was an expert, and made his escape from the ropes in a manner which would make a spiritualistic medium green with envy. This dog, through shirking his work, had incurred the enmity of the rest of the team, and they resented repeatedly his unwillingness to meet his part of the team's obligations. I saved him several times from the fierce onslaught of his colleagues after he had run away from the sled.

A good Eskimo leader dog is a wonder of intelligence. He is not guided by line or whip, but merely by words and motions of the hands. If, when the team is rapidly moving, he be suddenly called upon to halt, it stands to reason that if he stopped abruptly the rest of the team and the sled would run over him, or would become entangled in a snarl. He, therefore, when commanded to halt, makes a curve to the right or left and faces to the rear, moving slowly until the sled can be stopped. He then looks with bright eyes at the commander, waiting orders, and a motion of his hand suffices to make him change the direction in which the outfit is going. The leader, at least in some instances I have observed, is extremely proud of his responsibility, and, as a consequence, maintains an exclusive demeanor toward his colleagues. He sleeps by himself and growls when approached by what he considers his inferior. It is customary to feed him separately and encourage him in his vanity, and it is a conventional rule never to submit him to physical punishment.

The worst punishment that can be inflicted upon a conscientious leader dog is to reduce him to the ranks, and his abject demeanor as he sorrowfully slinks along with his tail between his legs is almost heartbreaking. On the other hand, the dog that has been promoted at once assumes a self-conscious strut. The old adage that dog will not eat dog was proven repeatedly on my trip.

On one occasion a dog received no food for nearly five days because we had through the

bungling of a lying guide underestimated the length of a march and had run out of the supply of dried salmon, which forms the sole diet of the Eskimo dog. In consequence we lost half a dozen of our faithful animals by starvation, a trial which to me was more agonizing than any personal suffering. I never saw during this period of misery a single sign shown by any one of the team to satisfy his cravings upon the body of his fellow.

Fidelity is the chief virtue of the Eskimo dog. One of my leaders, when crippled by starvation and overwork, had to be abandoned because he refused to be carried on the sled. I left him behind, feeling as if I were tearing myself away from a dear friend, but before we continued our way I gave him the last fish we had, depriving ourselves of that much food. Three days afterward, while we were encamping at the Eskimo village of Kahonak, the dog reached us, having followed our trail with bleeding feet and emaciated body for eighty-five miles, forty-five of which consisted of crossing the surface of the great Lake Iliamna in a "poorga" (a rather exaggerated species of blizzard).

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ODD FACTS ABOUT NEW YORK

THE amount of water used daily by the people of the greater city would make a lake which would be exactly one mile long, half a mile wide and seven feet deep. In other words it is 740,000,000 gallons.

The number of persons walking up and down Fifth avenue at Forty-second street in the daytime averages about 13,000 to the hour. The official figures are 129,930 for the ten hours between 8:30 a. m. and 6:30 p. m. The vehicles passing at the same time number 14,182. The pedestrians passing up and down Broadway at Forty-second street during the same ten hours averages 111,306, and the vehicles number 16,280. On Fifth avenue, at Thirty-fourth street, the pedestrians number 71,500 and the vehicles 16,930.

The total length of Manhattan Bridge is two miles less 1,230 feet. Williamsburg Bridge is 7,200 feet and the old Brooklyn Bridge is 6,137 feet.

The wharves and docks of New York, not including those on the New Jersey side, number 713.

Place all the streets of the greater city end to end and it is safe to say you would have a street that would reach across the continent. The streets of Manhattan, a borough which is more "confined" than some of the others, have an aggregate length of 186.5 miles.

The number of dead bodies found in the city in 1920 was 554, of which 470 were males. All of these were unknown when found, but nearly all were later identified. The persons reported missing in the same year were 6,670, nearly all of whom were traced by the police. Inquiries for many others were made, but the number stated are regarded as the actual missing.

The deepest part of New York Bay is at the southern end of the Narrows. The depth there is 109 feet. In some places out some distance from shore it becomes as shallow as fifteen feet.

The greatest depth of the Hudson River opposite the Battery is fifty-two feet. It is from fifty-two to fifty-seven feet opposite Central Park. Opposite Fifty-ninth street in the river the depth to bedrock is 125 feet, but seventy-five feet of mud and silt lie on this bedrock under the water.

In round figures and allowing for the changes wrought by tides the width of the Hudson opposite the Battery is 1,500 yards; at Fifty-ninth street it is 1,200 yards, and at Fortieth street 1,400 yards.

The city government owns or leases 2,900 buildings, whose annual lighting bill amounts to $918,916. The electric bulbs for these buildings alone cost about $100,000 annually, according to the officials of the Lighting Department.

The Black Diamond

By JACK J. GOTTLIEB

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

THE OWNER OF THE HANDKERCHIEF

THE inspector, keen-brained as he was, erred if he believed that Bob Quaine was guilty of having caused his father's death. He had left his father soon after dinner at six-thirty and had gone to the Florentine Club, where he had been joined by Doctor Greene. Neither of them had left the club until a startled person burst in upon them and announced that Mortimer Quaine was dead.

But the inspector was right in another respect. Bob Quaine knew something about the handkerchief. He knew who its owner was, and this very knowledge caused him as much pain as had the news of his father's death. For there could be no question of the fact that the owner of the fancy bit of fabric was involved in the mystery, and Bob was deeply in love with that very person!

He had met Laura Ayres at a fancy costumes ball, and from the first there seemed to be a mutual infatuation. Since then he had taken her to divers places of amusement; the friendship had ripened steadily. Laura was a small girl, with a wealth of brown hair and eyes that seemed to have grown bigger and bigger even after the rest of her had stopped growing. She was a buyer for a large downtown department store, and lived in a well-placed apartment with a girl chum. She had told Bob Quaine that both her father and mother were dead and that she had no relatives.

Somehow Bob divined that he was not altogether out of the range of suspicion. He had a premonition that the inspector had guessed he knew something which he had not revealed. He must be careful, he told himself; he must not make the rash step of rushing over to Laura's apartment and demanding an explanation. If he did that the act might be discovered, and thus Laura would be dragged into the mess. And, believing in her innocence as he did, though with a sinking heart, he did not want that to happen.

So he bided his time until after the inquest, which took place in the afternoon of the next day. One hour after the coroner's jury had come to the conclusion that Mortimer Quaine had come to his death at the hands of person or persons unknown—"though we advise the immediate arrest of the man known as Ty Zachary"—Bob Quaine turned towards the house in which Laura Ayres lived.

He had taken every precaution to thwart an attempt to track him, but his precautions were in vain. Though he did not know it, he was being followed by a small, wiry man, whose clothes were baggy and whose eyes were piercing.

Reaching the Sewell apartments, he entered the hall and trod up the stairs swiftly. It lacked ten minutes to five, and he realized that Laura would not be home yet, but he decided that he would wait and ponder things over calmly in the meantime.

To his surprise, when he rapped on the door, it was opened by Laura herself, instead of the girl chum, as he had expected.

The surprise was mutual; it seemed as though the last person Laura Ayres had expected to see was Bob Quaine. He noted the start she gave, and as he stepped into the well-furnished chamber a frown of irritation puckered his brow. Why did she appear bewildered at sight of him?

"What's the matter, Laura?" he asked softly. He seated himself beside her. "Didn't you go to the store to-day?"

She shook her head slowly. "No-o."

"Why—— Is there anything the matter? Don't you feel well?"

"No, not very well."

"You're sick. I'll call a doctor."

She raised a hand in protest. "It's not necessary, Bob. I'm not sick. I'm just not myself to-day, that's all."

"Then what——"

"Please don't ask me, Bob. I—I can't tell you; I really can't. If you only knew what I——" She paused. Her lips quivered.

Bob Quaine laughed lightly. "Pshaw! It can't be anything really serious, I'm sure."

He took the girl's hands into his own a bit roughly. For a while he gazed earnestly into her wistful, tear-rimmed eyes.

"There's something troubling you," he said, a trifle thickly. "Tell me about it. You know I have the right to ask, Laura."

But beyond a slight moving of her lips the girl made no attempt to answer. Her eyes wavered, then drooped. Bob Quaine could plainly hear a sob.

"But I *must* know," he insisted. "I've every right to know. Whatever it is, I'll help you. Don't be afraid to tell me, Laura. The girl I intend to make my wife must let me know of her troubles, so that I can help her extricate herself from them."

For a moment Laura's eyes contained a semblance of hope; the next instant it was gone. A sudden thought struck Bob. His eyes widened.

"Is it because of—my father?" he asked softly. "He—he's dead, you know; the papers have painted him a—a thief, but——"

She shook her head quickly. "You know me better than that, Bob!"

The girl placed her hand in the pocket of her dress and drew forth a tear-stained handkerchief. Bob Quaine started involuntarily. It was not *the* pretty handkerchief, the one she was so fond of and usually had upon her person.

Spellbound, he stared at it and at the girl for quite a time. He felt suddenly and hopelessly dismayed. Though he had known that the handkerchief they had found in the hand of his father was Laura's, still he had been hoping against hope, subconsciously praying that it might *not* be hers. Now——

"Did you go out anywhere last night?" he asked, surprised at the quavering of his own voice.

She turned a quick, blanched face toward his. A little gasp escaped her. The sound depressed Bob still more. Why, if she were totally innocent, did she start so at his query?

"No," she answered hesitatingly. "I was home all night."

He arose and began pacing the floor restlessly. The girl's wide eyes followed his movements. Once she opened her mouth as though to speak, but quickly closed it, sinking back into her seat hopelessly. Presently Quaine stopped in his tracks.

"Have you ceased to care for me, Laura?"

A beseeching light came into her eyes. "No, no, Bob; don't! It's not that."

"Then what is it?" he cried with angry impatience. "I demand to know."

She shook her head. His tone turned to one of pleading.

"Speak, Laura. Tell me about your trouble. Trust me. Is it serious?"

She nodded deliberately. "It's very serious." A tear found its way down her cheek. "But—it's something I daren't tell you."

Anger welled up within Bob Quaine. He bit his lips in mortification. Then impulsively he caught up his hat, thrust the door open, and flung a harsh "good-by" behind him. He rushed down the stairs and out into the street.

When he reached home he locked himself in his room, sore and sick at heart. Nor did he leave it that night.

At six o'clock that evening a small, wiry man, with baggy clothes and piercing eyes, entered a telephone booth. He dropped a nickel in the slot and gave Central a number.

"That you, chief?" he asked. "This is Olsen. Young Quaine just left the Sewell apartments on W—— street. He's on his way home now. I think the person you're looking for is staying at the Sewell apartments."

The exulting voice of the inspector came over the wire:

"Good work, Olsen. I think so, too. I'm sending some one down to relieve you. There'll be developments soon; bank on that."

CHAPTER FIVE

ANOTHER STARTLING CRIME

MORTIMER QUAINE'S will was read the next day. To Prichard Scanlon (who had left the hospital a well man on the morning Quaine met his death) was given the sum of ten thousand dollars "for inestimable services rendered in the past." To Mrs. Hearn, the housekeeper, was given five thousand dollars. A total of fifty thousand dollars was bestowed to various charities. The remainder of the Quaine fortune, both real and personal, was willed to Robert.

There was, however, another designation in the will. Doctor Greene was mentioned, and the gratuity he received thickened the general air of the double mystery of the black diamond and Mortimer Quaine's murder, at least in young Quaine's mind. The heir did not grudge Doctor Greene what he received; Bob Quaine was not that sort, and besides he had more than enough for himself. It was the endowment itself which caused him to reflect long and earnestly over the matter. For Doctor Greene was willed—the black diamond!

He commenced to harbor a dire suspicion of Doctor Greene. The feeling that the man who had been his dad's best friend knew of something concerning the black diamond or Mortimer Quaine's death which he had not revealed slowly presented itself to him. The impression grew and grew, and within two hours after the reading of the will a suspicion laid siege to Bob Quaine's mind. Could it be that Doctor Greene—he trembled to think of it—had had a hand in causing his father's death?

Next his thoughts roved to Laura Ayres. How had her handkerchief come to be in Mortimer Quaine's hand? How? How? Bob racked his brain for a solution, but he could come to no other than that she had been at the scene of the crime when it had been committed. And if she were innocent, why didn't she come forward and tell the police what she knew? For she knew something. Bob was certain of that. Her manner the day before had assured him that she did.

All day long Bob Quaine pondered, following various mental twists that led nowhere and only tired his groping brain. He ate a careless dinner then, and went down to the Florentine Club. Entering the reading-room, he looked casually about and dropped into an easy-chair, making no effort to do anything.

Joe Tranton found him there a half-hour later. The detective's countenance was flushed, and there was a sprightliness in his manner that caused Quaine, as he glanced at him, to straighten up and raise his brows questioningly. Detective Tranton dropped into a seat beside him and allowed a smile of exultation to flicker about his lips.

"Anything new?" Quaine asked.

Tranton nodded his head swiftly. "Yes, good news!" he declared. "I've succeeded at last!"

"Succeeded in doing what?"

"In finding Ty Zachary." Tranton smiled broadly at the sudden light in Bob Quaine's eyes. "Two of my operatives are on his trail this very minute with orders not to lose track of him. They discovered his whereabouts several hours ago. We've beaten the police in finding them," Tranton added proudly.

"What do you propose doing? Are you going to arrest him and turn him over to the police?"

"That is entirely up to you. I'm conducting the search under your orders."

Bob Quaine looked about him, instinctively lowering his voice. "Then we won't inform the police yet. We'll keep Zachary shadowed for a time. There's no knowing where and to what he may lead us."

"As you say," said Tranton. "Here's somebody making straight for us."

An offhand club acquaintance of Quaine's was approaching them. The two men looked up. The newcomer appeared to be fairly bristling with news.

"I say, Quaine," he cried, "hear what's happened? No? It's about Doctor Greene, that quiet, sharp-looking chap who came here once in a while. He's been found murdered in his office. And the black gem they say your father left him has been stolen!"

Bob Quaine, suddenly alert, sprang to his feet with an exclamation. Tranton did likewise. The black diamond seemed unlucky.

"But that isn't all of it," said the fellow jovially, as though the other's amazement gave him extreme pleasure. "There is a lot of evi-

dence as to who did the job, and they say there will be an arrest before the day's over."

"Who? Who's the man?" Bob Quaine asked quickly.

The club member chuckled before replying.

"Oh, some fellow named Prichard Scanlon!"

CHAPTER SIX

THE MAN TY ZACHARY

A BICKERING, neck-strained crowd had gathered about the house, and there were two patrolmen in the doorway. Bob Quaine and Detective Tranton, ignoring the angry glances cast at them, roughly wormed their way through the throng. As they ascended the cracked brown-stone steps the bluecoats glared at them.

"Whut is et yuh want?" one of them demanded of Quaine.

"I'm a friend of the dead man," Bob told him, "and I might be able to help the police. This man here is a detective."

The sturdy limb of the law looked at the badge that Joe Tranton produced, then stood aside and allowed them to enter. They did so speedily, coming into a small corridor whose indigence evinced the fact that Doctor Greene had not been a very wealthy practitioner. The office they entered was small, and there were but six or seven men in it.

A lean, grumpy-countenanced individual, Coroner Bland, was questioning a nervous young man, and the others were listening attentively. As the detective and Bob Quaine entered, however, the coroner ceased his rapid speech and directed an inquiring glance at Quaine. Bob recognized Coroner Bland as the same official who had conducted the inquest at his father's death.

"Hullo!" said the coroner eagerly. "Here's young Quaine. Maybe he knows something about this."

He looked at Quaine hopefully; his countenance fell as the newcomer shook his head in the negative.

"Sorry," Quaine said shortly, "but I can't say that I do. Detective Tranton and I have just heard about the disaster, and we rushed over. Where's the—where's Doctor Greene?"

Coroner Bland jerked a blunt forefinger towards a corner of the office room, where lay the body of the dead physician. The corpse was indiscernible, for it was covered by a white spread. It seemed that it had been placed in the least conspicuous part of the room.

"There," said the coroner. "He was slumped over in his chair by that desk, stabbed, when we found him. It looks very much as though the crime has not been premeditated, but committed on the spur of the moment, for the instrument of his death is a paper knife that Doctor Greene always kept on the desk. The man, possibly with no thought of murder, came in; there were heated words; the man grabbed the knife from the desk, and —exit Doctor Greene."

"And the black diamond—it's gone?"

Coroner Bland laughed gratingly—a quick, hard sound.

"Uh-huh; it is," he made answer. "If that dark stone could only speak, I'll bet you we'd have the mystery of this death and your father's cleared up in a trice! That diamond is the center of the entire broil. Greene himself acquired it only several hours ago, you know. It's a death stone."

"And you think—you believe the man who killed Doctor Greene is—Prichard Scanlon?"

"No doubt of it," the coroner nodded firmly. "This young man whom I've been questioning is—was, I mean—the doctor's assistant. He saw Prichard Scanlon come in, and he says Scanlon was in a deuce of a flurry. We've Scanlon's card here, which corroborates the assistant's story. Of course, even then we couldn't be sure; circumstantial evidence is a deceptive thing; but when the men I sent to Scanlon's address came back with the information that Scanlon had only an hour ago packed his grip and paid his landlady, why, then," and the coroner shrugged, "you can draw your own conclusion."

Full of misgivings, he asked quietly: "Then you're on the lookout for Scanlon?"

"We are," the coroner acceded. "We'll nab him shortly; bet on that, Quaine. And it will go much worse with him than it would if he'd not have tried to run away."

After a few more inquiries and assertions Bob Quaine and Detective Tranton left the house. They pushed their way through the crowds, walking briskly when they had recourse to the open pavements. For a time there was a brooding silence; then Quaine spoke:

"It seems to me, Tranton, that the coroner knew what he was talking about. It's true that the entire morbid affair revolves about the black diamond. Whoever slew my father did so because he wanted to come in possession of it. Doctor Greene was murdered for the same reason: witness the fact that the diamond is gone—disappeared."

"Yes, disappeared—and so has this fellow Scanlon," added the detective dryly.

Bob Quaine looked at him sharply. "Then you really believe that Scanlon killed Doctor Greene—and—and also—my father?"

"What else is there to believe?" Detective Tranton laughed gratingly, cynically—a worldly laugh. "Of course he killed Doctor Greene! An innocent man doesn't run away; things like that only happen in story-books. As for his being guilty of your father's death—I can't say. To tell the truth, I doubt it. But at the same time I believe that once we find Prichard Scanlon and make him tell *all* he knows, the entire mystery—— Hullo, here's Colton, one of my operatives."

A shock-headed man was coming towards them animatedly, and the two men paused in their tracks. The newcomer bowed tersely to Tranton.

"How do you do, sir," he greeted. "I was just about to telegraph a report to your office."

"What is it you wanted me to know?" asked Tranton.

The operative jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

"That fellow Zachary, of course—the man you told me to shadow," he said. "He went into the Sewell apartments about ten minutes ago. I've left Barrows outside."

"Did you go in?" Tranton interrogated.

"Yes. I interviewed the janitor. According to him Zachary has been coming into the apartments for the past two weeks—regularly every day. The janitor noticed him especially, because the Sewell is what you might call a swell place, and Zachary is no more than shabby-looking. And—he always goes into suite 104."

The announcement was like a thunderbolt to Quaine, so totally unexpected was it. His eyes widened, and he took a step backwards. Suite 104—of the Sewell apartments! Why—that was where Laura Ayres roomed!

He grasped the operative's sleeve. "You—you're sure?"

The detective looked at him in evident surprise.

"Of course I'm sure! What's wrong?"

Quaine ventured no reply. He was thinking—thinking hard. Tranton and his subordinate looked at each other wonderingly. Presently Bob Quaine moved forward.

"Come along!" he said pithily. "We'll see about this. The Sewell apartments aren't very far off."

Half running, half walking, Bob Quaine led the way. Detective Tranton soon pulled up with him and said: "There's the Sewell!"

Quaine walked more slowly now. How should he proceed? he asked himself.

An exclamation from Tranton caused him to turn about. The detective, his eyes riveted, was pointing his finger.

"Look!" he cried. "There's Prichard Scanlon."

Bob Quaine did look. A quick light sprang into his eyes; on the instant he forgot all about Laura Ayres and Ty Zachary. No, Tranton had not been mistaken. Prichard Scanlon, dressed as though for a journey, a suit-case in his hand, was nearing them.

It was evident that he was not aware of the proximity of Quaine and Tranton. He walked unnaturally straight; but the three men could detect a slight nervousness in his step. Even as they looked he turned his head and glanced fearingly over his shoulder.

"Come!" said Quaine, and took a step forward.

But the next instant Tranton's sturdy arm detained him. The private detective was not looking at Scanlon now; his gaze was directed towards the ornate entrance of the Sewell apartments. A gigantic, black-bearded man, his clothes not any too lovely, was coming out of the building. He hesitated for a moment on the sidewalk—a huge, ungainly, un-

kempt sight, looking for all the world like the Russian anarchist pictured in cartoons.

"Zachary!" Tranton whispered to Quaine.

But another surprise was in store for them. Even as they watched they became aware that Zachary's roving glance had stopped at Prichard Scanlon. The next minute, taking long, swift strides, Zachary had moved over to Scanlon and laid an arresting, paw-like hand on his shoulder.

(*To be continued in our next number*)

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ANCIENT INDIAN BURIAL RITES

FEW of the thousands of soldiers who died in France and whose bodies were returned to their homes for burial received such honors as were accorded to Willie Lewis, buried near Depew, Okla., with military ceremonies conducted by members of the Arthur J. Matheny Post of the American Legion of Chandler. Lewis was an American of the purest type—a full-blooded Euchee Creek Indian.

While serving as a private in the 143d Infantry of the 36th Division he was killed in action. He had scores of relatives near here, members of the Tiger and Big Pond families, and he was buried at the end of a long line of little houses covering the last resting places of his relatives. The oration in English was delivered by Courtland M. Feuquay, an attorney of Chandler.

Then came the most impressive part of the ceremony, the Indian burial rites. Chief John Big Pond, former leader of the Creek House of Lords and an uncle of the dead soldier, spoke in Creek, the language used at times in France to prevent the possibility of the Germans interpreting code telephone messages. Though the white persons present could not understand the words, they could not fail to be impressed with the eloquence and the bearing of the speaker. His rough old face did not quiver or betray by the moving of a muscle the emotion that he felt. Indian stoic that he was, he made no outward sign of grief, but tears were apparent in his voice, which he pitched higher and higher as he proceeded. As he began to speak all the Indian women set up the peculiar Indian cry of grief, which sounds something like the mournful howl of the coyote.

Finally, the old chief, his voice pitched in the highest treble, spoke directly to the dead, saying that he had returned to the prairie which he loved and which was his home, back to lie with his fathers and to start for the Happy Hunting Ground. He told him to look around and he could see the places where he used to ride his pony and shoot his bows and arrows as a boy. He spoke of the pride his relatives felt, and always would feel, in him and his white comrades, and how they would supply all his needs for the long trip he was about to take. His words were halting as he concluded and gave place to the boy's mother.

The mother had expressed a wish to have the flag that covered the casket, and it was removed and handed to her. She took from under her shawl a quilt she had made with her own hands and asked that it be tucked over the coffin. When kindly hands prepared to fasten the lid of the coffin they found that the screws were missing. A cousin of the dead man, himself a veteran, explained that the relatives did not want the screws put in place, as they feared they might hinder the departure of the spirit. And so the coffin was lowered into the shallow grave with the cover loose.

Another little house will be erected over the final resting place of the soldier and in it will be placed Willie Tiger's clothes and his implements of chase.

THE Midget Detective

by Harriet Mason

CHAPTER ONE

AT ten minutes past seven Albert Krull emerged from his room on the third floor of the Widow Osman's rooming house and began the descent of the stairs. The place seemed unusually quiet. Then he remembered it was Saturday night. Most of the roomers would be "uptown."

Halfway between the second and third floors a shaft of light fell across Krull's path. He stopped and looked through the glass transom of the room across the narrow hall. There under the yellowish glow of a gaslight George Coburn reclined in a Morris chair. His head was bent back and his mouth was half open. An open book lay upturned in his lap. As Krull looked a snore penetrated faintly to his ears.

"The lazy dog," Krull grunted. "Read himself to sleep."

Krull's upper lip curled slightly. His gaze shifted to the chandelier above the sleeping man. There were incandescents there, but Coburn evidently preferred the softer glow of a gaslight for reading. None of the electrics was burning. Krull noted this and continued on down the stairs. Some one might come along, and he had no wish to be seen peeping into Coburn's room. He wondered why Coburn didn't cover that transom with a curtain. Any one passing on the stairs could easily see into the room. His mind still on the sleeping man, Krull passed on out of the house.

Thirty minutes later he returned. As he mounted the steps to the third floor he noted that Coburn's transom was now dark. A grim smile hovered about his lips, and he continued on up the stairs to his room.

CHAPTER TWO

THE clock in the tower of St. Michael's slowly boomed out, loudly proclaiming the hour as eleven. Albert Krull, awake and restless, counted the strokes one by one. As the last faint echo died away there came a loud rap at his door. The noise startled him, and he sat bolt upright in bed. His heart pounded furiously and his breathing was fast and heavy.

"Who—who is it?" he stammered, his eyes striving to pierce the darkness.

"It's me—Mrs. Osman! Come quick, Mr. Krull!"

Krull heaved a tremendous sigh of relief. "In a minute," he called. He leaped from the bed and snapped on the light. He wriggled

into a bathrobe, slid his feet into a pair of house slippers and opened the door. Mrs. Osman, wide-eyed and kimono-clad, stood framed in the doorway. "What is it?" Krull asked.

"Oh! Do come quick! I—I'm afraid something's wrong. Gas is escaping from Mr. Coburn's room, and I can't wake him!"

Krull gulped strangely and swallowed hard. "Bu—but!" He swallowed again. "Why don't you unlock the door?" he finally managed to ask.

"I can't. It must be fastened on the inside. I tried my pass-key and it wouldn't work. We'll have to break in."

"Are you sure it's Coburn's room?"

"Of course I'm sure. Don't stand there like that when——"

"But—hadn't we better get some help?"

"I've pounded on nearly every door. Everybody's out. Are you coming?"

"Yes. I'll come. But I wish you could find some one else. If anything's wrong I don't want to get mixed up in it any more than I have to."

"Never mind that," replied Mrs. Osman. "You won't be mixed up in any trouble. All I want you to do is to break down the door. I'm afraid Mr. Coburn is dead, and to save time I'm going to call the police right now."

With that the landlady ran down the stairs, Krull following as far as the second floor. And while the Widow Osman shouted into the telephone in her cubbyhole of an office on the ground floor Krull fumbled at Coburn's door and swore under his breath.

"Damn it!" he growled. "Of all the rotten luck! Why couldn't she rouse some one else? This is one hell of a note, I must say!"

Still grumbling and swearing, Krull fumbled at the door. The pass-key was still in the lock, and he twisted it desperately. No use. It was evident the night latch was sprung from the inside. Krull pounded on the panels with his fists. "Coburn! Coburn!" he yelled, then kicked several times on the door. He began to splutter and cough. He felt dizzy. Gas was pouring from every crack. The air in the hall seemed saturated with it. A noise on the stairs attracted his attention. It was the landlady returning.

"It's no use," Krull called over his shoulder. "I can't get it open."

"Then break it down! He may still be alive! Hurry! The police will be here in a minute!"

Mrs. Osman stepped aside in order to give Krull plenty of room.

For a fleeting second Krull hesitated and gazed thoughtfully at the door. Much as he detested the job, he felt that he must do it. To refuse meant to invite—well, there was no telling what it might lead to, especially since there was a life at stake. But Coburn might already be dead. Too, there was a possibility that the room was empty. If Coburn was inside he was probably dead. If the room was empty—well, that gas had to be shut off in either event. And more to satisfy his own curiosity than otherwise, Krull drew back and hurled his weight against the door.

"Farther over to the right," Mrs. Osman directed. "Hit it nearer the lock."

Again Krull's shoulders struck it. This time there was a snap. Thus encouraged, he threw himself at it again. The screws holding the lock pulled loose at the impact and the door flew open. Krull lost his balance and sprawled heavily to the floor within the room. The Widow Osman clapped a hand to her mouth and nostrils and hastily and blindly retreated before the onrush of gas.

Krull scrambled to his feet, knocked over a chair, located another and groped for the window. He didn't trouble to raise the sash, but knocked out the panes with the chair. Almost overcome himself, he stuck his head through the opening thus made and gulped in great quantities of the pure night air. When his lungs felt better he attacked another window. After battering this one to pieces he thought of the gas jet. Sucking his lungs full of fresh air, he held his breath and groped for the chandelier.

His fingers encountered a socket and he snapped on the electric light. Now able to see clearly, he located the open jet and shut off the flow of gas. Once more he made for the open window and fresh air. As he did so he beheld the figure of George Coburn reclining in identically the same position as when viewed through the transom nearly four hours earlier.

Krull shuddered and stuck his head out of the window.

CHAPTER THREE

AN automobile drew up before the Widow Osman's rooming house, and two men hastily entered the establishment. The landlady met them in the lower hall.

"We're from headquarters," spoke Elmer Dodd, the smaller of the two. "You phoned? What's the trouble?"

"Up there!" Mrs. Osman gasped, pointing up the stairway. "On the next floor. His room was full of gas. He——"

"Come on, McGann," Dodd called. The two men hastily mounted the steps, while the frightened widow brought up the rear.

"Phew!" This from McGann. "Begorra, ut do shmell loike a gas house, shure enough!"

The open door to Coburn's room claimed their attention. Entering, Dodd took in the scene at a glance.

A chair at one side was overturned. Another, near the window, had two legs broken off. Bits of window-pane littered the floor beneath the two windows. At first glance the figure in the Morris chair appeared to be asleep. An open book lay upturned in his lap. His head was bent back and his mouth was half open. Another man stood at the window with his head outside.

Dodd stepped forward and touched the figure in the chair.

"He's dead all right," he said to McGann. "What's the big idea?" This to Krull, who appeared to be ignorant of the presence of visitors.

Krull turned slowly and eyed the diminutive Dodd with surprise.

"Why, I—the gas almost got the best of me. I was just getting a little fresh air. Who—who are you?"

"Well, come away from that window," said Dodd, ignoring Krull's query. "This air ain't so bad now." Thanks to a gentle breeze and a good draft the room was almost clear of the smell of gas. "Who is this man?" Dodd asked, turning to Mrs. Osman.

"Why, that's Mr. Krull," the widow explained. "He rooms on the third floor."

"So," mused Dodd. "But why is he here?"

"The door was fastened on the inside. I got Mr. Krull to break it in. See, the lock is torn off."

The little plain-clothes man emitted a meaningless grunt, then motioned to McGann, who took up a position near the door. Dodd glanced at Krull, now sitting on the edge of Coburn's bed.

"Did you disturb anything?" he asked.

"Not a thing," Krull answered. "After I broke the door I smashed these two windows, turned on the electric light and shut off the gas."

"Oh, then the room was dark!"

"There weren't any lights," explained Mrs. Osman. "Mr. Coburn liked the gas better. He seldom used the electrics. He said the glare hurt his eyes. He always read by gaslight. He must have been reading to-night. There's a book in his lap now. I don't see why he did it."

"Did what?" Dodd snapped.

"Why, kill himself," replied Mrs. Osman. "He——"

"Who said anything about him killing himself?" Dodd retorted.

"Why—you—surely you can't mean that he was—was——" The question died on her lips. Agitated to the point of hysteria, she bent forward and eagerly hung onto the little man's answer.

"Calm yourself, lady," said Dodd soothingly. "I didn't say what I meant. But a bonehead could tell that he didn't kill himself. Would a man be apt to lay an open book in his lap and lay back in his chair and wait for the gas to get in its work?"

"Then—he was *murdered?*"

"I don't know yet. Maybe it was an accident."

Krull emitted a chuckle of amusement. "Likely it was an accident," he retorted. A trace of sarcasm edged his words. "How could it be an accident? No windows were open to blow out his light. He would have to turn it out or blow it out himself. And the gas was lit."

"How do you know it was lit?"

"Why, I went out about seven o'clock. I happened to glance through the transom and saw it burning. What's more, I saw Coburn asleep in that chair just as you see him now. He hasn't moved a bit."

"Where did you go? And how does it happen that you are the only roomer present?"

"I went to the corner drugstore to get some cigarettes," replied Krull. "As for your last question, nearly everybody goes uptown on Saturday nights."

"How long were you gone?" Dodd asked.

"About a half-hour. When I came back I noticed Coburn's room was dark. I thought he'd either gone out or had retired."

"You seem to know a lot about it," Dodd blandly retorted. "Maybe *you* could tell us how he died!"

Krull shrugged his shoulders.

"*That's* for the police to discover," he answered sarcastically. "Though why they should appoint a *kid* to the job is more than I can see." Contemptuously Krull eyed the little plain-clothes man from head to foot. "I suppose," he went on, "that you call yourself a full-fledged officer of the law? Why," he sneered, "a kid of sixteen has it all over you. I wonder why they didn't send a real honest-to-goodness man in your place?"

"Oh, so you think I'm somewhat of a kid, do you? Perhaps you'd like to know something more about me. Well, I'm thirty-six, married and got two kids. I'm also a thirty-second degree Mason and belong to the Odd Fellows. I'm four feet six in my sock feet and weigh eighty-seven pounds stripped. My friends call me 'Shorty,' and I'm known on the force as 'The Midget Detective.' I've been on the force ten years, wear boy's shoes and can get a suit of clothes for half what it would cost you. There, Mr. Sarcastic, does that satisfy you? No? Well, stick around for a while and the *kid* may show you something."

With this parting shot the midget detective beckoned to Mrs. Osman and strode haughtily from the room.

CHAPTER FOUR

IN twenty minutes Dodd returned. Mrs. Osman had long ago come back and was standing near the door. The midget detective stood before Krull, his eyes boring into those of the man seated on the bed. Krull stood it as long as he could, then shifted his gaze to the floor. That stare which the little shrimp was directing at him was getting on his nerves.

"Why did you do it, Krull?"

"Wha—what are you talking about?" Krull spluttered and choked. His face took on a pasty white and his hands trembled violently.

"I'm asking you why you killed Coburn," Dodd repeated. "I know you did it. I know *how* you did it. The motive is all that's lacking."

Krull leaped to his feet. "Why, you dirty little runt!" he exclaimed. "I've a good mind to——"

At this point McGann took a hand. "Yez will sit down," he commanded, and gave Krull a playful shove with his huge right hand that sent that worthy bouncing back on the bed. "Begorra, Oi'll have t' shpank yez purty soon. Now sit there an' see that yez behave yerself."

Dodd thanked his aide with a look, then grinned down upon Krull, whose face now wore a look of fear. Then suddenly Dodd's eyes snapped fire. "I'll tell you how you did it," he said, "then maybe you won't be so free with your remarks."

"But, officer," pleaded Mrs. Osman. "Surely you don't suspect Mr. Krull. He couldn't have done it. He was asleep when I knocked on his door."

"Nevertheless Krull did it," Dodd said emphatically. "You remember I asked you a few minutes ago if you were having any repair work being done? That was after I'd been up to Krull's room and looked things over. You told me that you were having a new wall built across one end of the basement. The reason I asked you that question was because I had found traces of mortar on Krull's shoes. It looked like it hadn't been on there very long. When I went down in the basement and found a vat of plaster I knew then that Krull had been there."

"It's a damn lie!" Kull cried. "I wasn't in the basement."

"Tell that to somebody else," retorted Dodd. "You were there, and I can prove it."

"Well, considering that I *was* down in the cellar," Krull flashed back, "what does that prove. What has that to do with the case?"

"Oh! Then you admit that you were in the basement?"

"I admit nothing, except that I think you are a fool!"

"A fool," replied Dodd, "is a boob who thinks he can commit a crime and get away with it. If you hadn't stepped into that plaster you might have got away with this one. But there's always something that will give you away. In this case the whole thing is as simple as two times two. You got some of that plaster on your pants leg. You tried to clean it off. I found the rag you used, where you threw it behind the furnace. But you didn't get it all off of your pants leg, and the cracks around the sole of your right shoe is still full of it. You've bungled the whole job, and you'll hang for it, believe me."

Krull looked up, despair written on his face.

"Oh, hell! What's the use?" he cried. "I killed him. I'd do it aagin. I might as well tell you about it. You'd find it all out, anyway. Coburn threatened me with exposure at the bank. We both worked at the same place. I was in line for promotion, but somehow Coburn got the position I coveted. How it was done I don't know, but I've got a sneaking idea that he knocked me to the directors. Anyway he found out that I'd been taking some of the bank's money, and threatened to expose me if I didn't put it all back. The examiners were coming next week. I didn't have time. I didn't know where I could get the cash. I was short five thousand. With Coburn out of the way I could juggle the books and make them think it was him that took the money. As I went down the stairs to-night I saw him asleep there in that chair. When I saw that only the gas was lit that gave me an idea. In my younger days I used to be a meter reader, and I knew something about gas pipes."

"Go on," said Dodd as Krull hesitated. "Tell us the rest. Or wait. I'll tell it for you. You went to the drugstore, as you said. But you hurried and was back in a few minutes. Then you hustled around to the rear of the building and went down into the cellar by way of the entrance there. It was dark there, and you didn't see the vat of plaster. Your right foot was in it before you knew it. You struck a match and saw what you'd done. After wiping it off with an old rag, which you threw behind the furnace, you struck another match and hunted around until you found the gas meter."

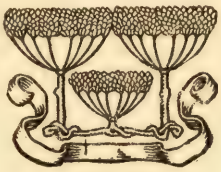
"It's true! It's all true!" groaned Krull.

"Then," Dodd continued triumphantly, "you turned that little cock which shuts off the gas before it goes through the meter. Your former job as meter reader told you that there was a cock there. You waited a few minutes until all the gas left in the pipes would be burnt up by that jet in Coburn's room. You knew that Coburn's light would go out when what little gas that remained in the pipes was gone. Then you deliberately turned on the gas again. When you did that Coburn's room would begin to fill up with it. You took a long chance that he wouldn't wake up before the gas got in its work. Seems as if that chance won. Am I right?"

"Yes. It's all true. I killed him just as you said. But I'm glad of it. Damn him! If he hadn't snooped around everything would have been all right at the bank. Yes, I killed him. Take me away. Let me get out of this room. Take me to jail. Anywhere to get out of his sight. I've confessed. I'm ready to pay."

"Bah!" snorted Dodd. "You cheap crooks make me sick. I wish a smart one would come along and hand me a hard one. Call the wagon, McGann. I want to get home to the wife and kids."

Send us a one-cent stamp to cover postage, and we will mail you a copy of "Moving Picture Stories."



"Shadowing" by Detectives

By AN EX-OFFICIAL

EVERY reader of nineteenth century fiction is familiar with the sleuth-hound of the police force, who "shadows" the suspected individual, following him or her like their shadow, hoping to obtain evidence which shall warrant a civil prosecution or procure the conviction of a criminal. "Shadowing" has, in these latter days, become a fine art—one in which the employees of the private detective agency have thoroughly graduated, and it is generally admitted that a good "shadower" must be born, not made—must possess a natural genius for the performance of his duties.

Let us suppose an imaginary case. Jones, an employee in a Sixth avenue shop, is suspected of being in league with a set of bad characters, who have felonious plans upon the stock-in-trade of his employers. There is no positive proof of his guilt; but he is living at a rate which is simply incompatible with his limited salary. So it is decided to set a watch upon his movements, to ascertain what company he keeps during his leisure hours, etc., and he is "shadowed."

Now there is one golden rule about the profession of the "shadower" which takes precedence of any other. Never let the "shadowed" one suspect that he is being followed, for, in detective parlance, "the game's all up if you're spotted." Once let the suspected individual know that his movements are watched, and he must indeed be an obtuse fool if he cannot shake off his "shadower."

Before proceeding any further, let me give one or two instances of the way in which a "shadow" can be "left."

I was once watching a stock broker who was suspected of embezzlement. It was feared that he would bolt to sunny Spain, and I held a warrant for his arrest, which was only to be executed if he were on the point of leaving the country, as the evidence of his malpractices was far from complete. In some mysterious fashion he became aware of the fact that I was on his track, and for twenty-four hours tried many of the old dodges to get rid of me. He would go into a corner public house at an hour when it was crowded and leave it immediately by the opposite entrance. He would enter a cab on the stand at dusk by one door, giving the cabman a direction by which to drive, and quit it by the other door before the horse started. But I was up to all these and similar moves, and never lost sight of my man.

But he "did" me at last. He entered a Bronx station, spoke to the gateman at the entrance to the middle platform, mentioned that he was not going by train, but wanted to meet a "crippled" sister who was to come in by the next train, tipped the man, and was allowed to pass onto the platform.

A train came in, and he peered into every car with a look of expectation. At the same time another train going in the opposite direction was leaving the platform; and my man suddenly turned round, grasped the handle of the last of the train—leaped lightly onto the platform and went into the car.

I ran after the train, but it was no good. I followed by the next train, but lost all clue of him. I caught the guard some time afterward and learned that the "gent" had got out at Albany; but I never got on the scent again.

Here is another instance. I was employed by a jealous wife to watch the movements of her husband, a retired grocer, whom she (rightfully or wrongfully) suspected of a flirtation with a chorus girl at one of the Broadway theaters. I deemed the job an easy one, and shadowed my man without difficulty for several days. How he guessed that I was doing so I cannot say; but he tumbled to the fact, and shook me off in a manner which was as

comic as it was vexatious. He left his home one morning to take a train on board of which I was soon seated.

Descending at White Plains, he walked leisurely out into the country, till I began to fancy I was on the point of a discovery, and expected to see him call at one of the isolated cottages to be found in that district. But no—he stuck to the main road, went on for a couple of miles at a leisurely pace, while I congratulated myself that he never looked around, or he must have noticed that I was following him. Presently I saw a carriage drawn up at the side of the road a little way ahead.

The driver was reading a paper, and I was never more astonished in my life than I was when I saw my man mount quickly into the buggy and, turning around, wave his hand to me an ironical adieu, while the mare set off at the rate of twenty miles an hour. He had evivently planned the whole thing, and arranged for the man to be there at a certain time. Pursuit was hopeless, and I returned to town to report my failure and to be terribly joked by my brother officers.

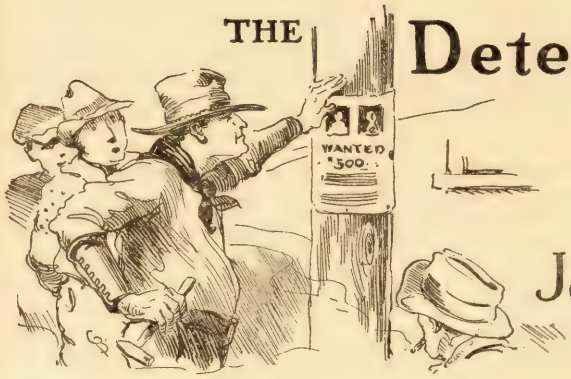
Now let me return to the imaginary Jones. In order to keep the "suspect" in ignorance of the fact that he is shadowed, the costume of the shadower must be so regulated that he can follow his man anywhere without exciting suspicion. So the shadow gets himself up as a smart guy, hangs about till Jones leaves his shop, and then follows him. Jones probably makes straight for his lodgings, and the shadow chooses a spot where he can keep watch on the door, having first assured himself that there is no other exit from the premises. Now he must wait—waiting is the worst part of the shadower's duties—in such a way as not to attract attention.

For the first hour or so he can look as if he had an "appointment," frequently referring to his watch, glancing up and down the road with an air of expectancy and exhibiting first signs of impatience and then those of dogged perseverance. If there is a shop the window of which commands a view of Jones's door, the "shadow" will install himself there with a newspaper, over the edge of which he "keeps his eyes open."

Ultimately Jones comes out, and once more the "shadow" takes up the trail. The chase may lead to a billiard-room, to a cabaret, or to any one of the many haunts in which young men pass their evenings; but the "shadow" must follow everywhere, and yet never obtrude his presence. He must be a man of infinite resource; up to every move on the board; ready to "cab it" when Jones jumps into a taxi, to to travel in the same train which carries Jones to the suburbs—possibly to meet his confederates. He must jot down little incidents—apparently unimportant — insignificant links which may complete the convicting chain of evidence.

A telegram sent from a certain office, at a certain hour; a letter handed to a subsequently identified messenger at a certain spot; a whispered conversation in a restaurant with a man who may be later on charged as an accomplice; frequent visits at an address where a "receiver" may be residing. Each and all may be important evidence, and must be included in the "shadow's" report, on the strength of which a prosecution is frequently decided on.

Considering that the "shadow" is often on duty night and day, getting a few hours' sleep at odd times; that his work is fatiguing, not only to the body, but to the brain, and that he requires long practice ere his natural astuteness can be turned to account, no one can grumble at the high rate which his services command. Ten dollars a day and expenses is the average rate charged by a private inquiry office for a "shadow," of which the "shadow" gets half, his account of expenses being, commonly enough, a much more modest affair than that which is rendered by the proprietor of the office to the client who has applied for a "shadow."



THE Detective's Rival

by Joe Burke

DAN TAYLOR, bookmaker, gambler, and various other "professions" that suited his fancy, was in a quandary. To date the big crook was unknown to the police of the city. The cause of his disturbed tranquillity was "Mrs." Taylor—or Stella. Arriving unexpectedly in their luxuriously furnished apartment on Madison avenue, he found her in tears.

"Why the weeps, Stel?" he asked sharply, towering over the petite form that was drenching the sleeve of a perfectly good shirt-waist with her tears. "What ails you, dearie?"

Startled, she looked up and tried to smile through the mist.

"You, Dan?" A tiny handkerchief was busy mopping up all traces of her grief.

Dan Taylor was good to look at, meaning he had all the physical and mental requirements of a "he" man of this period. He was a giant in size and an Adonis in looks, with the wisdom of Solomon. Taylor had breezed into New York from the South five years back. His suave manner, great generosity, and other rare personalities soon won him a host of friends.

The man was always plentifully supplied with money, reluctantly confessing he was a bookie and gambler, but fellow members at the Crib Club said he played very little. At the races he never plunged and handled no bets. They wagged their heads and wondered what he really did do for a living.

The woman he called his wife was a winsome little brunette. She granted that she had been a mortal for twenty-five years, and, like Dan, had many friends. Stella came into his life by an accident. One night two years back Big Dan was returning to his club at a late hour. A feminine cry for help brought him in time to put to rout a couple of footpads who had attempted to rob her. It was the old story: country girl, looking for work, at the end of her resources, and her first venture on the road to—God knows where. Dan took her under his ponderous wing, and she had been obviously contented ever since.

But to-night he found her in tears, and therefore this narrative.

"What's wrong, Stel?" questioned Dan again, taking the frail little body up in his arms as he would a child. "Not feeling well?" He laughed as he kissed her.

With a deep sigh of content she allowed herself to be snuggled up in his strong arms before she replied.

"My mother, Dan. She lives in a small town in the West."

He gently seated her on a chair, removed his coat and hat, and perched himself on the edge of the table, confronting her.

"Is she ill?" he asked kindly.

She shook her head slowly in the negative.

"She wants me to come home."

Dan's eyes strayed to a priceless bronze Buddha, his latest gift to Stella, squatting majestically on a pedestal in the corner.

"We'll miss you," he told her with a mirthless laugh.

The floodgate of grief once more was turning loose its briny torrents.

"You know, Dan, how much I hate to leave you," she began amidst sobs. "But you know that I found out about you."

He was now looking straight into the tear-stained face.

"I thought as much. How long have you known?"

"Since the night, two months ago, that you came home all ragged and dirty and said you were held up. I saw the burglars' tools in your overcoat pocket after you went into the bathroom.

Her sniffing and the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece were the only sounds that broke the stillness of the room for the next few minutes.

"As you wish, Stel," Dan broke in. "Too good for a cracksman, maybe?"

His tone carried a note of sarcasm.

"No, Dan, that's not it," she hurriedly assured him. "But I can't go on living this way."

He arose from the table and paced the room.

"You're right, kid. You're right. Some day some rube bull will get onto my game—the big ones in the city won't—and then it will be a smoke party for yours truly. Not alive, Stel! Not alive!"

Stella arose slowly from the chair. Stopping Dan in his incessant walk, she took one of his big hands in hers.

"You won't be sore if I go, will you, Dan?" she pleaded. "Mother's growing old; she needs me."

The crook looked down at her quivering lips, raised her chin with his free hand, bent over and kissed her.

"Don't you worry, little girl," he smiled as he patted her cheek; "it's all for the best. There's no game that you can beat all the time—the crooked game, anyway. I'd hate to have those gumshoes drag you in on my account. When I think how they'd rag you it makes me daffy."

His handsome face paled slightly. There was a dangerous glitter in his eyes. Drawing his hand gently from hers, he grasped her by the shoulders and swung her around facing a room beyond.

"Go to it, girlie!" he ordered with strained gaiety, giving her a gentle shove. "Annex yourself to some of your glad rags, the best you got, Stel, old girl. We're gona dine tonight; dine as we never did before. This—this——"

His hands slid from her shoulders, and without another word he swung on his heels and strode out of the room to hide his tears.

"Poor Dan," murmured Stella as she watched him vanish from view. "He was born for better things."

Stella was among the passengers on one of the Western trains the following day. She was going back to the town where "Mrs." Taylor was unknown. The parting had been brief, distressing to both. When Dan shook her little hand for the last time, then swung off the train as it was getting underway, he felt that she had gone out of his life forever.

There was no brass band to greet that red-lidded little woman when the train puffed to a standstill at Saxonville. The little city boasted of its many up-to-date advantages. Bartley Ford, a celebrated detective, made the place his residence.

He had loved Stella ever since she was a slip of a girl with pig-tails and in pinafore. After her mother's death, that occurred a few months after her home-coming, he confessed his affection, proposed, and was accepted. The lonesome girl found a haven in the big-hearted officer, who worshipped his wife almost to idolatry.

Stella grew to love her husband. Her intrigue with Dan Taylor was fast being obliterated from her memory as time went on.

At the end of a year Sheriff Tom Mead, mopping his leathery face with a red bandanna 'kerchief, muttering execrations on the flies, lumbered wearily up the steps of the Saxonville Courthouse. In one hand he held a large

placard, in the other a hammer and tacks. The idle habitués unbuckled themselves from their shade-cooling siestas and trailed curiously after him.

On the bulletin-board that conspicuously adorned one of the wooden pillars that marked the entrance, he carefully tacked the card. He then stepped back, his arms akimbo, thumbs locked in his belt, and scrutinized it with satisfaction. The gaping onlookers pressed forward and read the following:

WANTED FOR MURDER

Big Dan Taylor, wanted for the murder of two police officers in the town of Mortan, New York State. He is an expert cracksman. The killing of the officers was the result of his attempt to blow the safe in the Post-office.

Taylor is about thirty-five years of age, a giant in size; weight about two hundred and fifty pounds; brown hair and gray eyes and the polish of a gentleman. No other marks known to the police. All traces of him were lost two hours after the shooting. It is thought that he is headed for the West, where an old sweetheart of his is living in seclusion.

$2,500 reward will be paid for his capture, *dead* or *alive*.

WILLIAM CALLY,
Chief of Police.

The flaring poster also bore a front view and profile of the handsome fugitive, whose bold eyes seemed to flash out a look of defiance.

Stella was humming a popular ditty as she flittered between the kitchen and the dining-room. She did not hear the front door open and her husband's quick tread until he had blindfolded her eyes with his hands, swung her around and kissed her.

"You frightened me, Bart," she censured with mock severity.

"Sorry, dear," he laughed as he repeated the kiss.

He had prepared himself for dinner when he again entered the room and seated himself at the table. His wife was already sitting down.

"I am glad you are accustomed to the use of firearms, dear," he said, looking up at her from his half-finished meal after conversation and daily events had dwindled.

With her teacup poised she looked at him perplexedly.

"What do you mean, Bart?" She laid the teacup down untouched.

"Oh, I don't want to alarm you, Stella," he began gingerly, laying down his knife and fork and unfolding a napkin. "A poster was handed to Sheriff Mead to-day, announcing that a murderer from the East is headed this way."

"A murderer?" She whispered the question with awe. "From where, Bart?"

Her husband arose from his chair and strode to her side.

"Don't be alarmed, little girl," he said soothingly, patting her soft round cheeks. "We'll keep a sharp lookout; he'll no doubt pass up this town, anyway. If he comes this way it will be my duty as a detective to arrest him."

Some unaccountable intuition prompted Stella to learn more about the killer, and when Bartley had kissed her again before leaving for police headquarters she asked him to tell her about the fugitive.

He hurriedly gave her the wording on the placard, assured her that everything would be all right, then turned to go.

Her face was pale, and she was trembling.

"What is his name, Bart?"

He turned and looked at her in wonderment; then, startled at her pallidity, he rushed to her side.

"You are ill, dear! I have frightened you. There, there, girlie, run right into the house. I'll stay with you until you feel better."

He gently put his arm about her waist and guided her into the pleasant little home she now owned on the suburbs.

"His name?" he asked as they walked slowly towards the living-room. "It's Big Dan Taylor."

With a low moan Stella fainted.

Propped up in bed, Stella lay weak and wan a few hours later. Her husband paced the floor anxiously in the room beyond, staring with anxious eyes into space. A neighbor, Mrs. Cannon, had just left her, assured that she was now all right

Days and nights of torturing suspense and hideous nightmares had followed the shock of the announcement of Dan Taylor's crime. Every sound or footstep on the porch sent her into trembling frenzy. Her husband was worried and blamed himself for her illness. The doctor's diagnosis was a nervous breakdown. He advised a change of climate. Stella welcomed the medical man's suggestion, and was soon making preparations for her departure, as her husband had secured a leave of absence from the department.

The day before the one set for their vacation Stella heard the rear door of the house close softly, followed by heavy footsteps on the kitchen floor. Thinking that it was one of the tradesmen from the town, she opened the door and entered the room.

With a cry of horror she recoiled before a figure that confronted her. It was big Dan Taylor! But what a different Dan! On his massive frame, hanging in shreds, was the remains of what had been once a decent suit of clothes. His thick brown hair that she had often ruffled when teasing him was a tangled, snarled mass. His once handsome face was bearded, dirty and bloated. The once laughing eyes were glaring and menacing.

For a moment the murderer faced the terror-stricken girl, her back to the wall, glaring blear-eyed at her.

"You!" she gasped. Why did you come here, Dan?"

He stepped towards her, his breath fanning her hair as he towered over her. How loathsome he was when the mask had dropped. The dashing, handsome Dan Taylor of the past was dead. Supplanted in his stead stood the bestial murderer.

"I've got to get some dough, Stel," he muttered. "I heard from a pal that your man was the big noise in this burg and handled a lot of cash."

What he said was true. Bartley Ford was the treasurer of the police association of the city.

"But it isn't his money, Dan."

"You listen to me, you!" he hissed. "I once saved you from the gutter! The bloodhounds of the law are crowding me d—— close. I don't care whose money it is; I'm gonna get it. Produce it, girlie, and make it snappy. You can also annex yourself to some of your fine scenery. You're gonna trot along with me."

She wrenched herself from his grasp and fled past him to the back door. Before she could pull it open he was at her side.

"Not so fast, girlie, not so fast!" He whirled her around. "When you beat it out of New York the jinx came in, and everything went dead against me. As I told you, it had to be a rube bull that got hep to my lay. You're coming along and the dough, too. If you don't, by God, I'll kill that man of yours when he comes through the door."

"No, no! Not that, Dan!" she pleaded wildly, clinging to his torn habiliment as if to restrain him. "I'll get you the money; I'll go with you; I'll do anything; only don't do that!"

Her eyes strayed from his repulsive face to the door leading into the dining-room that to her horror was slowly and noiselessly being drawn open. She tried to scream out a warning to the invisible one, who she knew must be her husband.

Big Dan, who was watching her convulsive attempt to articulate, whirled with an oath, his hand flying to his hip pocket as he rushed for an open window.

"Hands up!" snapped the clear, steady voice of Ford. "Put 'em up, and lively, you sneaking coyote!"

The detective, his strong face white to the lips, a gun leveled straight at the fugitive's breast, walked into the room.

"Who are you, and what do you want here?" asked Ford with deadly coolness, his finger taut on the trigger. "Talk fast, you skunk. I calculate you're Dan Taylor, as I've seen your picture on a placard."

"Right you are, old-timer; I'm that guy." The snarl was more in evidence when he went on. "Don't think you've got me scared with that gat; you ain't. You won't do any shooting. Ask her what I'm doing here."

Bartley Ford, startled at the signification of the murderer's emphasis on the word "her," relaxed his wariness as he turned his gaze on his trembling wife. He seemed stunned when he mentally pieced together all the circumstances relating to the incident: the ending phrase on the wanted placard: "It is thought

that he is headed for the West, where an old sweetheart of his is living in seclusion"; his wife's sudden illness when he mentioned his name and the indifferent attitude of the man charged with so grave a crime. His voice was void of its clanging note; it seemed far away when he spoke again:

"What do you mean?"

A stifled moan from Stella preceded big Dan's sneering response.

"What I said."

Ford staggered back to a chair, his revolver falling from his limp hand with a clattering noise to the floor. He slumped heavily into it. His gray, strained face had aged years in that few minutes. His little world of happiness was fast slipping away from him. He turned his haggard face towards the inert figure of the woman he loved better than life, and his voice was husky, his eyes imploring.

"Tell me, Stella; tell me what he means?" he entreated brokenly. "Tell me, dear, that what I fear is not true? Do you know this man? Did you—— Oh, my God, Stella, tell me——"

His voice broke, great sobs shook his frame.

For the first time since the entry of Stella's husband on the scene big Dan's sneering and stoical mien diminished. The hard glitter in his eyes was supplanted by a misty glaze of pity. His big form relaxed, he shifted uneasily on his feet as he looked at his tortured victims. He made a little chucking noise with his tongue as if audibly punctuating a mental exclamation. His chest rose and fell as if in anger. He gritted his teeth as he strode to the side of the grief-prostrated man.

"Say, you," he said gruffly, placing one of his strong hands on Ford's shoulder, "is that lady over there your legal wife?"

The detective nodded listlessly.

"Well, you big rube, you ought to get a d—— good beating!" The threat failed to arouse Ford as the murderer went on in a strained voice. "I've just doped this little sob party through my ivory bean. You got that little lady all wrong. Sit down. I'll do the talking for a few seconds."

Ford had arose, staring wildly at him.

Big Dan kicked the gun that lay at Ford's feet under the table.

"I don't know that little lady; never saw her before in my life. I came in here to get what I could find lying around loose. She came in and crabbed my game. I heard that you was the keeper of this berg's police fund, so I figured that there was a strong-box 'round somewhere. She stood pat, and refused to open up and pass it over. I hadn't time to crack it; short of tools, anyway. I knew that some rube bull would be nosing around soon, so I put over a little of the strong-arm stuff, telling her I'd bump you off when you stuck your nose in that door. Poor little woman, I scared her blue. And you, you big stiff!" he finished, shaking a ponderous fist under the now animated man's nose. "That little lady there," with a gesture towards Stella with his doubled-up hand, "was gonna do anything I asked her just to save your miserable life. Go over there and ask her pardon now. I'm moving on."

He was holding an automatic revolver in his hand as he backed towards the door.

Ford, who had rushed to his sobbing wife, soothing her with endearing words and mumbling apologies, was paying no heed to the fugitive until he was at the door.

"Just a minute, Taylor!" he cried. "Don't go out there. I've got a couple of cops laying for you."

His warning was a fraction too late.

Misconstruing his meaning, big Dan, with the cry of "Not alive, bo, not alive!" pulled open the door and sprang through the opening.

Sharp commands followed, then a fusillade of shots, and then all was silent.

Bartley Ford and his wife rushed to the door and threw it open.

On the ground at the foot of the steps, his sightless eyes glaring up at the sun, his revolver clutched in his rigid fingers, his life blood oozing from gaping wounds in his body, lay all that was once mortal of big Dan Taylor. Sprawled out on the ground a few feet away, dead also, were two of the town's police officers.

Taylor had run true to form and averment: "Not alive, not alive." He also verified the musing remark that was made by Stella the night before their parting over two years before.

"Poor Dan. He was born for better things."

Fakirs Tricks Exposed

"THE foundation on which every sharper works is avarice," said a fakir, after lighting a fresh cigar, "and he is as apt to catch the citizen of a big town as the farmer living by himself. I was attached to a circus for several seasons, and my statistics proved that the biggest share of my money came from townspeople. I had a wheel of fortune, two or three patent medicines, a prize drawing, etc., and I have taken more money at once out of a lawyer or merchant than out of a countryman. It is curious how all sorts of people will invest their money on a wheel of fortune. There never was one made which didn't give the operator 75 per cent. advantage to begin with, and by trickery this advantage is increased fifteen or twenty per cent. You must know that the operator has things so fixed that he can stop the wheel at will. In a town in Rhode Island a member of the Common Council, who was accounted one of the sharpest men in the locality, left $200 with me before he quit my wheel. If there is any raffling or dice shaking, it is all fixed, of course. In the prize drawings you may find gold and silver watches and sums of money displayed, but these cannot by any possibility be drawn.

"I know several men who have grown rich and retired from business on the sale of liver invigorators and consumption cures. Both remedies are made of the same materials—to wit: water, whisky, and one or two extracts. In Dayton, Ohio, a fakir connected with our show sold 130 bottles of liver invigorator and 208 bottles of consumption cure in four hours, and not over one-quarter of the lot was sold to farmers. When you appeal to a man's avarice you hit him hard; when you get him to thinking his liver is out of order, or that he is consumptive, you can take his last cent. You have seen the glass bulbs filled with reddish fluid which fakirs claim to test the blood with? Any one of average sense must know they are frauds, but I have seen the best physicians in a town pay their ten cents with the rest. About the only thing connected with the outside of a circus which is not a fraud on the public is the electric battery. That's all right, and the owner will give you all your money calls for, and sometimes more.

"Now, take the three-card-monte business or thimble rigging. These two games have been worked for the last fifty years all over the United States, and the public has been warned against them tens of thousands of times. They are still the most profitable games to be worked. Even old gamblers are enticed to bet. Several years ago, while I was taking a vacation at a health resort in Wisconsin, a couple of the fraternity called for my assistance to help 'work' a farmer. The intended victim was a sharp, keen man, about 30 years old. He had been everywhere and was up on all dodges. He had been tried with the gold brick and treasure dodges, but had refused to bite. We held a council and decided upon a plan. He had three or four fine horses for sale, and the trio of us drove out to his place to make a purchase. We were Illinois stock raisers and horsemen, and it was apparent that he sized us up for sharp fellows. One of my companions, whom I will call Jim, did most of the talking, and he alone desired to do the buying. Jack and myself sat down on an old hay rack in the barnyard, and scarcely noticed the horses as they were paraded up and down in front of us. At the proper time Jack took out his cards and began to show me how it was done.

"I bet him that I could pick out the card, and we began to talk in loud tones and attract attention. The farmer finally came over. He knew all about the game and smiled in pity at the idea of being caught, but in less than ten minutes, and that without any urging from any of us, he had bet and won $10. That was the entering wedge. He was allowed to win $30, and then cleaned out of $40. His spirit of

avarice was now thoroughly aroused, and I'm telling you the solemn truth when I say that he put up the horses and walked into the house and brought out a bag containing $900 in gold.

"He sat down with greedy eyes and pale lips, and won and lost until we had his last dollar. There was no explosion when he had parted with his last gold piece. On the contrary, he volunteered the statement that all had been fair and above board. An afterclap always accompanies such events, however, and we got out of the State just as he had secured warrants for our arrest.

"The safest game worked in the country was the counterfeit money dodge, and a goodly number of fakirs rolled up fortunes by it. I supplied myself with a lot of new greenbacks —ones, twos and fives—and then appeared in some small town as an agent or detective, or a stranger seeking recreation. It requires only a few days to size up the people. In every town of 3,000 inhabitants there are half a dozen men who are ready to deal in the queer if it can be done safely. The money I had with me is, you understand, perfectly good. When I had selected my man I exhibited the money as counterfeit. I was quietly supplying the 'stuff' to a few good fellows at so much on the dollar. Before he buys I give him a bill to take to the post-office or bank. It passes without question, and he is elated. I am ready to leave a dollar bill with him as a sample, but if he gives me an order to be filled two weeks later he must pay me a certain sum in advance, say $40 on the hundred. To prove to him that I have his interests and safety at heart, I produce a paper in which he makes me his financial agent to receive and receipt for all moneys. Then I give him my note of hand, due some weeks ahead, for whatever money he pays me, and he rests assured that the law cannot trouble him.

"His order is never filled, of course. Suppose he kicks. He has given me power of attorney. I have not had a dollar of the queer in my possession. The document is an effectual bar to his recovering or prosecuting. I have seen two or three tests of it, and the fakir came out with flying colors in each instance. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, however, the victim loses whatever he has advanced without thought of raising a row. He has been caught in bad company. He intended to swindle his neighbors. He is amenable to the law. He is glad enough to let the matter drop and say no more about it, and the fakir goes from pasture to pasture and rolls up a fat bank account. When you read in some newspaper of the sharpness and cuteness of the American people, just remember what I have told you. No people are swindled oftener and none hunger so badly for the fakir and his tricks as the wise guy."

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CUTTING ICE WITH VIOLIN MUSIC

HOW many people know that music causes ice, and even steel, to become so brittle that it "snaps" easily?

In Siberia boys and girls often put this knowledge to good use. During the winter most of the rivers freeze down to the mud on the bottom. Even the wells become so frozen that they have to be heated before any water may be drawn.

This proves so long and costly that the only alternative is to cut blocks of ice and store them in some odd corner of the home until wanted.

In a solid mass ice is not easy to break, as you know. If struck with heavy weights it only splinters instead of breaking in lumps.

To avoid this Siberian people drill holes in the ice, according to how they wish to break it. A boy or girl then commences "fiddling" away on a violin.

The effect is curious. As the violin is played, the vibrations travel down the holes in the ice, penetrating right into the depths, and cause the ice to become brittle. The blocks can then be chipped out with a hammer quite easily.

The Tick of the Clock

by

Josephine S. Brooks

THE entire village of Lateville had become stirred out of its apathy. Never before had such a cold-blooded, bold murder been committed. The most prominent, the most benevolent man, a man of unimpeachable character, had been foully strangled with the strangest of weapons—a slender bunch of raffia strands, evidently stolen from an adjoining room to avert suspicion.

They had found the victim with his gray head drooping forward on his desk.

The adjoining room belonged to the daughter of the slain man, and there the girl, Marian Rolfe, amused herself making raffia knick-knacks—baskets, trays, and other articles so dear to young women.

The name called up a picture of a girl of twenty-two years, blonde, tall and haughty; proud of being the child of an irreproachable, kind father, and proud also of his wealth.

A girl whose hands were a marvel of beauty, yet strong and efficient.

No other clue but the raffia had been discovered, not even a footprint nor finger-mark.

The case baffled the detectives.

Every room and closet had been carefully examined. Every panel on the walls was inspected, that any secret openings might be disclosed.

Not a cry had been heard. It was as if Death himself had silently entered and marked his victim. Even the lights in their soft white bowls seemed dimmed down to a funereal glow.

"It's the work of no common, bungling murderer, that's clear," declared one of the secret service men. His companions nodded approval.

They had searched the grounds and the girl's chamber, and had fairly explored the victim's room, the room where, at his desk, with his back to the long, low opening window, the master of the room had sat late at night with his papers. Not even a finger-spot could be seen on the light-colored paint of the window frame.

"The criminal must have worn gloves, new ones at that," decided the clever chief detective, turning to his force. "Then there's another thing that looks significant," he continued, his hands cupping his chin, his lips shut firmly; "I have just noticed that the clock stopped at 12:30, midnight, the probable hour of the deed. Now, it looks to me as if the prowler might have tampered with that clock. No doubt the slow, steady ticking rasped his nerves and weakened him."

Chief Dunstan stood gazing as at some vision. Straightening, tall and with massive brow wrinkled in perplexity, he resumed:

"It looks mighty bad for the daughter. The knife used in cutting raffia bore on its side the letter 'R'; it was a lady's knife. Then, again, the servant, Peters, Mr. Rolfe's valet, confided to me that he that evening had overheard the girl and her father quarreling over a young fellow who occasionally calls. They said something about her father cutting her off if she allowed the fellow's visits. The girl had answered that there were other ways to secure one's rights and money. Peters said that Miss Rolfe had then slammed the door and left the room."

At this information the men lapsed into deep thinking.

Soon the detective again spoke.

"The girl, of course, is crushed at the suspicion and at the confinement in the lonely room. I'll never forget the picture of despair she presented when I visited her. Her lips were drawn and her hands locked tight in agony. She must be innocent, I feel it strongly. Girls don't murder their fathers on the strength of a few hasty words. The man must be caught, if only to free this poor girl. What could have been his motive?"

A hand timidly touched the chief on the arm and a smooth, oily voice called his name.

To Dunstan the touch seemed stealthy.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked suspiciously sharp as he saw a craven-faced, apparently meek man before him.

"I'm the butler. Peters and I ain't any too good friends, and——"

"Why, and what's that to us?" The words fell crisply from the chief's lips.

"Why, it's this way; there's Lucette, the maid. We're both crazy over her, and that night——"

"Well, out with it," snapped the chief impatiently.

"Yes—yes, I'm coming to it, sir. Peters and I met in the hall, only a little piece down from the master's room. Peters and I were scrapping, like we always——"

"Or spying—which?" sneered the chief, interrupting the speaker.

"No, sir, not that." The man began rubbing his hands servilely. "'Twas about the girl Lucette, and I see—I hate to say it, sir—I see the young mistress; she didn't see us; she just shot out of master's room, her face just filled with hate, and there was fear on it, too. She rushed into her room, and——"

"Well, what of it, man?" The chief stood glaring at the cringing object before him.

"Oh, I thought you'd like to know that—that there was strands of raffia clinging to her dress, and——"

The chief's eyes widened in horrified interest. He and his men had found a small portion of raffia on the door-knob. The murderer had secured part of it for his purpose.

"Well, sir," went on the low-pitched, crafty voice, "when she came out the raffia she held in her hand caught shut in the door; she was that mad she snatched it away and left half the bunch inside. If I may be so bold to suggest, sir, that's the very bunch the murderer——"

"You seem to know a good deal about it." The chief, now deeply perplexed, eyed the man sharply.

The butler, abashed, slunk away like a guilty child.

"Watch that man, Chief," warned his assistant.

"Takes a rogue to catch a rogue, eh?" he answered.

"I'll ask Peters about him. But I feel sure he isn't clever enough to do so mystifying a deed. The girl herself told me she heard nothing that night, it blew so hard. Any noise she would have attributed to the wind. It was some cunning fellow that could enter that windy night and keep the papers from scattering. He picked the right night for his black deed."

"Didn't the servants see any skulkers around the place?" asked one of the force.

"I am coming to that, though it gives little light on the matter at present. Peters told me that one evening he spied a man gazing at Mr. Rolfe's window. The servant shouted to him and started for him, but the fellow escaped. Suddenly he heard a faint rustle in the hedge, and he made a dive for a white spot protruding from the shrubbery.

"He held fast, and found it to be the hand of a man, the spy, who wrenched clear and made off. But before he went Peters got a good look at the sneak's face. Says he can identify him. This servant is very fond of his young mistress, and will work hard to free her

name. I, myself, imagined I saw a faint footprint. It was from a flat foot, which always shows the whole of the footprint, while an arched one shows only the ball and heel or not much more. This may help a little."

"Do you trust Peters?" asked the assistant. "I don't like his shifty look. He may be faking the story." He was visioning the servant's stupidly cringing air, indicative of mock humility.

After a few seconds a meek-faced service man quietly announced: "Here's a slight clue I found, Chief Dunstan. It might prove helpful," and he produced a button that had been torn away from a new glove.

"Good, Bentley," cried Dunstan. "This proves my conjecture was right. Where did you find it?"

"In one corner of the piazza directly under Miss Rolfe's window ledge. She beckoned to me excitedly this morning. She pointed it out to me and said it had rolled off the ledge, and she knew it was there somewhere."

The chief slowly nodded. He nervously stroked his chin as he said to the men: "I think I'll work farther away. Meanwhile bend all your energies to the case. The girl has helped more than anything else. She's innocent. I'll prove it. Why, suppose it were my Elsie."

The hardened man's voice lowered a trifle shakily.

On one of the stormiest nights of the season, when honest men seek the shelter and comfort of their firesides, two figures might have been seen creeping stealthily through a patch of dark woods. The foremost one shuffled along, casting sharp glances on all sides. At such times as the fugitive halted the pursuing shadow paused.

The wind shieking and whistling through the tree-tops and the heavy downpour of rain drowned the noise of the follower's steps.

"Guess I'm on the right track this time. The fellow was trespassing near the Rolfe property," muttered Chief Dunstan. "Tough work, though. Ha!"

The man could be heard running swiftly ahead, and soon there gleamed on the darkness a faint ray of light.

Dunstan crept nearer, and could just discern the outline of an old shack.

"What can he be doing there? There's nothing but a check missing," he pondered. He drew nearer just as the man peered out into the darkness. He saw him pull down the old tattered curtain. Through one of the rents Dunstan saw the man—rough, bristle-faced, and ragged—stoop and untie a coarse bag. He took from it three hens, whose dead necks he wrung, as if to make sure of his work. Dunstan heard him chuckle as if in anticipation of a good meal. In spite of the discomfort of rain and wind the chief laughed low and good-naturedly. "Foiled again," he breathed as he turned homeward.

Not long after Dunstan went to interview his old friend and helper, Towne, the jail warden.

"Towne," he began, "I want your help again. In the first place, have you had any new prisoners lately?"

"Only one. He was sent in two days ago for forgery. Somehow he doesn't look like a real criminal. Nothing great to look at neither. His name is Jim Blake."

"I haven't many clues, Towne; only a flat footprint, a button torn away from a glove, and——"

"What, a glove button!" exclaimed the warden, starting forward, his face a study of interest and surprise. "Why, Blake has flat feet, and I took a pair of new gloves with a button torn from the wrist away from him. I wondered at the time what he had been doing with gloves, new ones at that. He doesn't look like a glove man," he laughed. "I'll get them. Have a smoke; make yourself at home until I come back."

When the warden returned Dunstan fairly snatched the gloves from his hand and fitted the button into the torn wrist.

"Look here, Towne, this just fits. I hope we'll soon have our man. I myself feel like a villain, keeping that girl shut up on suspicion for a few saucy words, a bunch of raffia and beads. Why, girls drop beads and hairpins anywhere. That theory exploded long ago. I tell you, I know the girl is innocent. She is in an increasingly nervous state now. To be sure, she has her sweetheart an hour every day to comfort her a bit. But how? With a guard to keep watch."

"I've seen such tragic endings to circum-

stantial evidence that it makes me feel badly for the girl," admitted the warden.

"There's another thing I ought to confide," continued Dunstan. "It's about this clock affair. I want to put Mr. Rolfe's clock on your mantel. Then I will hide behind the window draperies. At 12:25, midnight, I want you to get Blake in here some way. Give him a feed, anything, so that you have him here. I'll come about 12:15. Be ready for me, for I feel we are nearing a solution. Be careful; act natural, so he won't suspect. Oh, I nearly forgot to say that you'll have a visitor in the guise of a preacher. It will be Peters, Mr. Rolfe's valet. Allow him to get a peek at your prisoner. He'll recognize him. Good-night, Towne. Be careful; go easy."

"Wait a minute, Chief; about the forgery. Why couldn't this fellow have stolen one of Mr. Rolfe's checks?"

"Towne, I believe you. I'll hunt it up. Good-night. I must hurry off."

So it happened the next morning that Blake caught sight of a long-faced parson gazing at him pitifully. It was for a minute only, much to Blake's relief. Somehow it left him suspiciously uneasy and nervous.

The next night as the hands of the clock pointed to 12:15 Dunstan arrived at the prison. He produced Rolfe's clock wrapped up mysteriously. As he placed it on Towne's shelf he turned with outstretched finger to his host.

"Mind you, Towne, trot out your man—sort of kindly and offhand, you know; and at 12:24 I'll be hiding behind the curtains. At 12:25 Blake must be in this room. Good! I see you have a feed for him. By the way, I found out that one of Mr. Rolfe's checks is missing. Guess we're on the right track."

Dunstan nodded meaningly.

At 12:28 Blake sat eating. With watch in hand Dunstan noted with grim satisfaction the passing seconds. He saw Blake look around suspiciously. Then the criminal began to eat. As the silence grew oppressive the detective noticed that the man shifted uneasily in his chair and that his food stayed suspended on the fork. Then Blake glanced stealthily at the clock ticking ominously loud.

"Loud ticker," the man ventured, eyeing Towne timidly.

"Yes," came shortly from the warden.

Taking courage, Blake looked up. "Clocks are lonesome sounding things." He trembled, with a keen look at Towne.

"H'm! Think so? I don't," and the warden sauntered carelessly to the window, where a hand pressed his arm in a warning to linger near the spot.

Blake's brow puckered into anxious lines. To him the warden's movement held a troublous significance. With his heavy eyebrows knit and with his unshaven face, Blake looked to-night more like a murderer. He was no repentant slayer, notwithstanding his agitation at the dull ticking.

The chief, alert and with eyes never leaving the culprit's face, came at once to this conclusion. His experienced eye took in every motion and quiver of the prisoner's countenance.

Suddenly, at the continued silence, Blake tiptoed quickly to the mantel and stopped the clock as the hand pointed to 12:30.

At the slight noise the warden was about to turn his head, when a hand clutched a second caution.

Blake crept softly back to the table. After a quick glance at Towne he settled down to his food. The man's hands shook and his shoulders heaved. Then he spoke, trying to quell the tremor in his voice: "I—I guess I'm through, Mr. Towne. Do you want me for anything special? If not, I think I'll turn in; it's late." His voice grew shaky and weak.

"No, Blake. It was just a little favor. You've given me no trouble," and the warden came forward.

"Good-night then, Mr. Towne. Thank you for the favor."

"It's all right, Blake." He laid his hand for one second gently on the man's shoulder. A wave of pity at the nearness of Blake's doom surged over him.

As Towne turned he saw Dunstan sitting down at the table. His lips were firmly pressed together. He nodded to Towne. "I'm satisfied," he said, rubbing his hands together. "What's it mean? Just this. Mr. Rolfe's clock was stopped at 12:30, the hour of the murder. It has turned out exactly as I prophesied. The monotony of the ticking got on this man's nerves. I'm sure now we've got our man; I wasn't positive until to-night. I

haven't found the reason for the crime yet," he admitted.

"Dunstan, you're a clever one, I must say," complimented Towne.

"If Blake is any part of a man at all, he will confess to save an innocent girl. He's got to," added the visitor sharply, pacing the room. He looked up at the clock. "I'll send for it in the morning; I'll need it. Good-night, Towne. I'll see you again," and he was off.

Later Peters swore that the man of the hedge and Blake were one and the same man.

The prison next day received a call from Dunstan, who confronted the guilty man with convincing proofs. He presented a touching picture of the imprisoned daughter.

The detective's words seemed to make a deep impression on Blake.

"It will be well for all concerned, man, if you'll tell the truth that will free this innocent girl. For this alone, if there's one spark of manhood left in you, you should speak."

Dunstan waited.

"Yes, I have enough manhood to shield a girl—that girl in particular, and——"

"In particular. Do you know her?" asked the astonished chief.

"I will tell you all. I have no one that cares for me; I am alone in the world. I have little to live for; why should I keep silent? This murder"—a faint shudder interrupted his words—"was new work for me, although I've planned it for a long time. I grew fearful at the deathly stillness and ticking when he—he was nearly gone; so I left him and stopped the clock, as you may have surmised."

He looked searchingly at his caller. But Dunstan gave no sign. He knew, however, that this man was no common murderer, thief though he might be.

Blake resumed: "Since that night I have seen but one hour before me—'12:30-12:30' it said. To me it also ticked: 'mur-der—er—ret—ri—bu—tion.' I was so weak when I finished the job I could scarcely get away. I stole a check from the desk to block suspicion. As I rushed through the window the button of my glove—for I wore new gloves for the same reason—caught and I had to tear it away. I wonder your men didn't find that button."

He looked questioningly at Dunstan, whose countenance remained immovable.

"What was your motive?" the chief asked.

"Isn't this confession enough? I'll answer that question at my—last—hour."

He lifted his head proudly and looked bravely into Dunstan's eyes—eyes that shone with a kindly light, yet with firmness.

Further questioning brought no change in Blake's answer, and no cause was assigned until the day the criminal walked with slow and heavy tread down the gloomy corridor to the death chamber.

The footsteps of the men reverberating ominously on the stones of the long, dark passageway, somewhere a clock dismally striking the half hour—12:30—blanched the prisoner's face. His lips murmured: "12:30 for the last time!"

In one second the horror gave place to calm relief.

The man braced up, head held high. He would be no coward, he'd die like a soldier, lonely as it was with none to care. If later he quailed no one noticed it.

When asked if he had anything to say, anything more to confess, he spoke calmly, slowly emphatically:

"It is worth the price I am about to pay, and I am glad I committed that murder, for that man wronged my mother. I am his unacknowledged son. Don't ever let his daughter, my half-sister, know. For her sake I am confessing it. I am satisfied. I have avenged the wrong to my sainted mother." His voice quivered.

"That is all I have to say. Gentlemen, I am ready."

He straightened, proud and tall, like a soldier at drill.

A great silence that seemed to pulse with pity and sympathy settled down upon the dismal death-room.

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The Smile Trap

By WARREN W. VAN GORDEN

CHAPTER ONE

AS the clock in the church tower struck the hour of one, the figure of a man stole from the dark mouth of an alley and made his way in a furtive manner past the all-night drugstore on the corner. Halfway down the block he stopped with a shiver, turned his worn coat collar up, and drew his cap down about his closely-cropped head.

Far in the distance an arc light gleamed fitfully through the mist of falling sleet. A cold, biting wind from the water front drove down the all-but-deserted street.

The man shivered again and sought the protection of the ramshackle buildings that lined the dismal thoroughfare, as he continued his way towards the light beyond.

As the man came to the corner he drew up short, and with a gasp crouched back into the black shadow of a doorway. Rounding the corner, his long arms swinging, came the burly form of Detective Pat Conroy.

With a muttered imprecation the mysterious night prowler flattened himself against the doorway waiting for the detective to pass.

Charlie Allen, better known to the underworld as "Soapy," had just been released from prison. At any other time he would have passed the detective by without fear, knowing that Conroy would have nothing on him.

On this occasion, however, Soapy had important business on foot. The successful culmination of his plans depended largely upon his presence in town remaining unknown to his natural enemies, the police, whom he feared as well as hated. Hence his unwillingness to be seen by the approaching detective.

In the underworld, before Soapy's enforced vacation in the big prison, he had been looked upon as a yegg of the first water. His specialty was safes, and as a peterman, as the safe blower is sometimes called, he was supreme.

Soapy had been unusually successful in dodging the police, until by some unfortunate chance he had made the mistake of cracking the safe in the home of the Hon. Judge Kenwood. From then on misfortune had hovered about his unlucky head.

The newspapers had made much of the affair, and the police, goaded to the extreme, had thrown out the dragnet, with the result that Soapy was drawn in as a suspect.

On account of insufficient evidence, the police were obliged to give him his freedom. However, before he was allowed to depart, he was finger-printed, and much against his will photographed and Bertillon measurements taken.

On seeing that he would have to go through with the ordeal, Soapy swaggered across the room with a sneer upon his thin, white face. When ordered to pose for the picture, he had thrown up his head, his lips parted wide in a derisive smile, to show his contempt of the system and the police department in general.

A few days later Conroy, who was investigating the robbery at Judge Kenwood's home, had come across a perfectly good set of finger prints upon the smooth surface of the steel safe.

A comparison of the prints with those on file at police headquarters had done the trick, and Soapy had again fallen into the clutches of the police. He was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to a long term in prison. In his anger, Soapy had lost his head and threatened the judge in no uncertain terms. This, of course, only added more time to his sentence.

During his long confinement in "stir," his hatred had gradually died down for want of fuel to feed the flame. As the time drew near

for his release, his mind held only one thought —to get away from that living hell and to once more be free.

Back in his old haunts, Soapy had remained carefully hidden, while he waited for his shattered nerve to mend. At last, in need of funds, Soapy had decided to wait no longer to make a crack. If successful, he had planned to leave his old stamping grounds and go far away. Unknown to the police, he might make a new start, and even go straight—who knows?

By nocturnal snooping, Soapy had at last discovered a promising crib, and the night being propitious, he had started out on the job with his old-time enthusiasm.

One thing Soapy kept firmly in mind, and that was that he would not slip up and fall into the clutches of the police again. He had made his plans well. He would leave no telltale clews behind him this time.

As the sound of the detective's footfalls died away in the distance, Soapy gave a vast sigh of relief. He waited until the detective had disappeared from sight, then started briskly forward to his destination, which was many blocks uptown.

CHAPTER TWO

AS Soapy approached the palatial home of his intended victim, he noticed with satisfaction that the house was in total darkness. A glance at the luminous dial of his wrist watch showed him that it was ten minutes after two.

From observations he had made the night before, he knew that the patrolman who had the beat had passed at two o'clock, and had rung in at the police box on the corner. That gave him practically two full hours in which to turn the trick before the patrolman again came that way.

Watching to see that he was not observed, Soapy crept through the thick hedge which surrounded the grounds, and slipped quietly towards the rear of the house.

The servants, he had found out, were quartered on the third floor, while the owner, who was a bachelor, slept on the second floor. The safe was in the library, which was on one side of the house to the front. All this information he had picked up without arousing curiosity in the sly ways of the professional snoop.

At a window which he judged gave into the dining-room Soapy set down the black leather bag he was carrying, glanced sharply about, and after assuring himself that all was as it should be, prepared to make an entry.

For fear that the sash might be wired, he decided that it would be unsafe to attempt to raise the window with a jimmy. From the black bag he drew forth a wide roll of adhesive plaster. Removing the gauze covering he applied the plaster to the glass. A quick, firm pressure, and the glass broke with scarcely a sound, coming away from the frame in almost a solid piece.

Careful not to come into contact with the sash, Soapy stepped into the cavernous darkness of the room beyond.

Drawing down the shade, so that a draft of wind would not blow through the broken window and cause a door to bang, he fastened the shade to the sill with a couple of thumb tacks with which he had provided himself.

Standing perfectly still in the inky black room Soapy listened with all his might. Now and then a gust of wind shook the house, causing the blinds to rattle and thump as they swung back and forth in the gale. All inside the room was as still as death.

Sure now that his entrance had not been detected, Soapy drew forth an electric torch and directed a ray of light about the room. He found as he had expected that he was in the dining-room.

Passing through a door straight ahead, Soapy came into a large reception hall. In a moment he had entered the library and closed the door behind him.

Making sure that the shades were tightly drawn, so that no gleam of light could be seen outside, he slipped over the slide on the torch and looked about for the safe. After searching for quite some time, Soapy discovered the safe cleverly concealed behind a swinging book case.

Kneeling down on the rug, Soapy gave his attention to the strong-box before him. He observed at a glance that the safe was a good

one and that it would be almost impossible to try and work the combination. There was a quicker way, one in which Soapy excelled.

As he removed from the bag his marvelous set of highly tempered instruments and laid them out in a row before him, his heart beat faster and his senses thrilled with the joy of the game. Selecting a tiny drill, Soapy started it into the crack of the door at the exact place where the upper tumbler was located. The keen bit, with a dull whirring sound, ate its way slowly into the hard metal of the safe.

After a time Soapy removed the drill and wiped the perspiration from his face. The steel of the safe was extremely hard, and the work was tiresome. The slowness of the operation told upon Soapy's tensed nerves. If he could only have a smoke, but this he know was out of the question.

All at once a bright thought came to his mind. Fishing into his pocket, he withdrew a cigar which he placed into his mouth. Drawing his teeth down upon the weed with a grunt of satisfaction, he returned to his work upon the safe.

With extraordinary care, Soapy filled a large glass hypodermic needle with the soup and squirted it into the holes he had made. Then he proceeded to pack the outer surface and the cracks of the door with soap.

The secret of a perfect and noiseless puff depends largely upon the scientific placing of the correct amount of soap over the explosive. In this important detail he was adept, and for that very reason had been honored with the name of "Soapy" by his brother cracksmen.

Picking up several rugs he carefully adjusted them about the safe to help deaden the sound of the explosion.

It was all over in a moment. Soapy had judged the correct amount of the explosive to a "T." There had been a dull rumbling boom that had caused the windows to rattle, but that was all. A fine blue ribbon of smoke mingled with dust drifted up from the shattered safe and arose in a wavy column past the light from the electric torch on the table.

Grasping a jimmy, Soapy pryed open the inner compartment and then drew back, his ugly mouth dropping open in surprise. Lying there before him, and ready to his willing hands, was, he estimated, a small fortune. There were several large packages of bills, and at one side were plush-covered cases which he knew must contain jewels.

Reaching forward, Soapy selected a case at random and pressed the spring. Nestling in its bed of satin was a curiously shaped platinum brooch set with beautiful diamonds, which winked and sparkled in the faint yellow light.

Soapy gazed at the jewels fascinated. Without a doubt the brooch alone was worth at least thirty thousand dollars.

Muttering to himself, and with hands that shook nervously in his excitement, he began to pack the bills into the bag before him. In a few moments he had emptied the jewels out of their cases and placed them with the money.

Soapy's mind was running riot. Not in his wildest dreams had he pictured such a haul. He had only to get safely away and then to lay low for a while until the hue and cry were over. Then he could slip out of the city, and in some distant country live a life of luxurious ease.

Soapy's rat-like eyes roved here and there. Yes, he had done his work well. There was not a sign of a clew. He looked down at his gloved hands and gave a soft laugh. There would be no finger prints to give him away this time. A final glance about the room and he picked up the bag. As he did so his eyes encountered the short, black jimmy which was resting against the wrecked door of the safe. Stooping over, he picked up the bar. Halfway erect he paused. His quick ears had detected a sound. As he swung quickly around there was a sharp click and the room was flooded with glaring, blinding light.

CHAPTER THREE

IN dressing gown and slippers, standing midway in the room, was the rotund figure of Judge Kenwood. His cold, glittering eyes bored into the burglar's with a contemptuous stare.

"So I've caught you in the act, have I?" he exclaimed in sharply accusing tones.

As Soapy looked at the man before him, he realized that fate had brought him into a trap.

He had blundered into the very house which he would have avoided like a plague. This man who once before had been instrumental in taking away his liberty stood before him, a condemning light on his hard, relentless face.

Again he would be sent to that horrible place of living death. He was caught like a rat in a trap.

Of a sudden a vast, overpowering rage rose up in his heart against this man who stood in the way of his liberty. Something snapped in his head. The light before him danced and quivered a blood-red haze. He felt a roaring in his ears as he plunged forward and struck forth with all his might with the heavy steel bar.

Looking down at the still form that lay crumbled there on the rug, Soapy felt a vague, undescribable premonition of impending danger. He looked fearfully about the room. The house was painfully still. In the distance he heard the rumble of a passing trolley car. Then the loud bang of a closing door from the room above.

In a wild panic, Soapy dropped the black bag, turned and fled from the house, his only thought to get as far as possible from the haunting sight of the dead man on the floor.

Rushing headlong into the alley from which he had come forth only a little more than two hours before, Soapy picked his way through the maze of tin cans and other rubbish until he came to a two-story shack which fronted upon the wharfs.

The lower floor was used as a poolroom and restaurant, and was patronized by sailors and wharf rats, as well as by the scum of the underworld who used the place as a rendezvous for the hatching of many a dark deed.

Above were furnished sleeping rooms which could be rented for the sum of twenty-five cents a day and up. It was here that Soapy had lain in hiding since his return from the big prison up the river.

With the utmost care Soapy opened the battered door and crept up the creaking stairs to the smelly hallway above. Feeling his way through the dark hall, he tiptoed into his room, closed the door, and turned the key in the lock.

He was shaking as if with the ague, and it was with great difficulty that he managed to light the solitary jet above the shabby dresser. The sputtering gas jet illuminated the room but dimly, and as it waved to and fro it cast grotesque shadows upon the dirty wall, hiding to some extent the squallor therein.

Hardened criminal though he was, Soapy had never before committed a murder. Lighting his cigarette with trembling fingers, he paced back and forth across the room. At last he was able to gain some semblance of calm.

Soapy began to breathe easier. His mind began to clear. Pshaw, he was safe enough. Even if the police should suspect him, he could prove an alibi. Black Agg, who ran the place, would swear that he had not left the building during the entire night.

He began to curse, as he thought of the fortune that he had left behind. But at any rate he had had revenge. Soapy began to gloat over the thoughts of his crime. He had paid back the score for those horrible years behind prison bars. He would lay in hiding until the affair had blown over. Then he would strike again. With this thought in his distorted mind he stretched himself out on the unmade bed and fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW long he slept Soapy did not know, but it was really about noon when he was awakened by a loud pounding on the door of his room. Slipping out of bed, he drew his automatic from beneath his pillow and placed it upon the dresser. Then he covered the weapon with his cap. Walking over, he turned the key and opened the door wide.

Standing in the doorway, one hand pulling at his huge black mustache, stood Detective Pat Conroy.

Soapy was astounded. He had expected that the police would find his hiding-place, but not so soón. Covering his surprise with a yawn, he asked:

"Well, what brings you here?"

"You know very well why I'm here," declared the detective, a queer smile on his weather-beaten face. "The chief wants to see you down at headquarters. Come along!"

"You've got nothin' on me," whined Soapy.

"Maybe not," snapped the detective sarcas-

tically, "but can the chatter. Get a move on! I've got something to show you at headquarters."

As Soapy turned back into the room for his cap Conroy followed him. Before Soapy could stop him, the detective reached his long arm over his shoulder and picked up the cap from the table.

He laughed harshly. "Ha! Just what I thought. That's an old trick, my man. I'll take charge of the toy," and he proceeded to pocket the pistol. Handing the cap to Soapy, the detective took him by the arm and propelled him from the room.

Chief Willis looked up with a smile as Conroy ushered Soapy into the private office.

"Well, chief, here he is," observed the detective, with a sly wink.

The chief looked down at Soapy, the smile still on his stern face, saying: "Sit down, Soapy, I want to talk to you."

"What do you want with me?" whined Soapy.

"I've something to show you, but first we'll have a little talk." Passing a box of cigars to Soapy, the chief motioned him to take one. Then he scratched a match on the desk and held it until Soapy's cigar was aglow.

Soapy was puzzled. He had expected the third degree, and here he was sitting in the chief's easy-chair and smoking a good cigar. He did not quite like the chief's smile and of Conroy he was still afraid. He began to wonder if it were not a scheme to throw him off his guard. Well, he had matched brains with the police before, and came out ahead. He could do so now. He would take the lead. Aloud he said: "What do you want of me? What's the game, anyway?"

Pointing his finger at Soapy, accusingly, the chief snapped: "You are under arrest for the murder of Judge Kenwood."

Soapy stiffened in his chair and then snarled: "If the judge was killed as you say, why pick on me? Just because I threatened the judge once, you can't hold me for his murder."

"Look here," broke in Conroy. "You killed the judge and you'd better own up to it. We've got you dead to rights this time!"

Something in the way the detective spoke caused a sensation of uneasiness to come over the ex-convict. Quick as a flash his mind went over every detail of the crime. The tools he had left behind bore no distinguishing marks, and he knew that no prints had been left behind. They were trying to bluff him into a confession. He laughed and then said: "You've got nothing on me. I can prove an alibi."

"Here's all the alibi we need," muttered Conroy as he reached over and drew from Soapy's pocket the last of the two cigars he had bought the day before. Then picking up the cigar Soapy had been smoking he passed them both to the chief.

"I guess that'll clinch the case, all right," declared the chief as he gave his attention to the cigar Soapy had been smoking.

With a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, Soapy remembered his desire to smoke while drilling the safe. He must have left the unlighted cigar behind. But he could not see how the cigar could have anything to do with it.

Laying the Havana Soapy had been smoking to one side, the chief held up the other two, saying: "Same brand cigar. One has been chewed."

Like a drowning man grasping for a straw Soapy cried out: "You can't hold me on evidence like that! There's hundreds of men smoke that same kind of cigar."

"True," explained the chief, "but the cigar you left behind has your print on it. So does the one you were just smoking."

Soapy's head began to whirl. His print upon the cigar? Impossible! He recalled clearly that he had worn his gloves when he had bought the cigars at the pool room. He had not removed them again until safely back in his own room. With a terrible fear gripping his heart, Soapy felt that he had slipped up somewhere, but he could not figure out where.

He smiled in derision and turned towards the chief. With a sharp cry he became rigid. He found himself looking into a mirror which the detective had thrust before him.

Sounding far away came the voice of the chief, saying: "I can see you're mystified. The print you left was not a finger-print, but the mark of those broken teeth. They left perfect identification marks. They are on the cigar you dropped in the library when you

murdered the judge. They are also on the cigar you were just smoking. It's curtains for you, old-timer."

Soapy sprang to his feet. "You"ll never send me to the chair!" he screamed. He dove straight for the window.

Before Conroy could reach him Soapy had plunged through the glass and fallen two stories to the paved courtyard below.

"Maybe it's just as well," murmured Conroy as he stood by the chief and looked down upon the lifeless form.

"There's just one thing that puzzles me," said the chief in a low voice as he turned away. "How did you know that the teeth marks on the cigar belonged to Soapy?"

Detective Conroy picked out a photograph from the Bertillon cabinet and handed it to the chief, saying: "Soapy fell into a 'Smile Trap.'"

The photograph was of Soapy, his head thrown up and his lips distended in a wide, derisive smile. The broken teeth were plainly visible. Soapy's smile had cost him his life.

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FACTS ABOUT YOUR WATCH

OPEN your watch and look at the little wheels, springs and screws, each an indispensable part of the whole wonderful machine.

Notice the busy little balance wheel as it flies to and fro unceasingly, day and night, year in and year out. This wonderful little machine is the result of hundreds of years of study and experiment. The watch carried by the average man is composed of ninety-eight pieces, and its manufacture embraces more than two thousand distinct and separate operations. Some of the smallest screws are so minute that the unaided eye cannot distinguish them from steel filings or specks of dirt. Under a powerful magnifying-glass a perfect screw is revealed.

The slit in the head is 2-1,000ths of an inch wide. It takes 308,000 of these screws to weigh a pound, and a pound is worth $1,585. The hairspring is a strip of the finest steel about 9 1-2 inches long, 1-1000th inch wide and 27-10,000ths inch thick. It is coiled up in a spiral form and finely tempered. The process of tempering these springs was long held as a secret by the few fortunate ones possessing it, and even now is not generally known. Their manufacture requires great skill and care. The strip is gauged to 20-1,000ths of an inch, but no measuring instrument has as yet been devised capable of fine enough gauging to determine beforehand by the size of the strip what the strength of the finished spring will be. A 20-1,000th part of an inch difference in the thickness of the strip makes a difference in the running of a watch of about six minutes per hour.

The value of these springs, when finished and placed in watches, is enormous in proportion to the material from which they are made. A comparison will give a good idea. A ton of steel made up into hairsprings when in watches is worth more than twelve and one-half times the value of the same weight in pure gold. Hairspring wire weighs one-twentieth of a grain to an inch. One mile of wire weighs less than half a pound. The balance gives five vibrations every second, 300 every minute, 18,000 every hour, 432,000 every day, and 157,680,000 every year. At each vibration it rotates about one and one-fourth times, which makes 197,100,000 revolutions every year. In order that we may better understand the stupendous amount of labor performed by these tiny works, let us make a few comparisons. Take, for illustration, a locomotive with six-foot driving-wheels. Let its wheels be run until they have been given the same number of revolutions that a watch does in one year, and they will have covered a distance equal to twenty-eight complete circuits of the earth. All this a watch does without other attention than winding once every twenty-four hours.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

1 "The Eel Man," by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by Chas. F. Oursler.
13. "Under a Mask," by Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by Chas. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by Redfield Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline C. Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29. "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by Beulah Poynter.
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector J. Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieutenant Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by William Hamilton Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by C. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign on the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura Reid Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William Hamilton Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by Ethel Rosemon.
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by William H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by Chas. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. H. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by Hamilton Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
68 "Detective Wade's Big Case," by Ethel Rosemon.
69 "The Spirit Bell," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
70 "The House Behind the Wall," by Julian Darrow.
71 "The Admiral's Spoons," by Wm. H. Osborne.
72 "The Canine Clue," by Thos. J. Lally.
73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Andreen.
74 "The Wonder Girl," by Ralph Cummins.
75 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
76 "The Spirit Witness," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
77 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
78 "The Stolen Year," by Edmund Elliot.
79 "The Affair at Hollywood House," by Wm. Kofoed.
80 "A Keyless Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie.
81 "Professor Satan," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "A Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
86 "The Face in the Crowd," by Marc Edmund Jones.
87 "The Man in Room No. 7," by Chas. F. Oursler.
88 "Four Ten-Dollar Bills," by Henry G. Howland.
89. "A Challenge to Power," by Dr. Harry Enton.
90 "The House Next-Door," by Police Captain Howard.
91 "The Trance Detective," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
92 "Friday at Twelve," by Katherine Stagg.
93 "By the Left Hand," by Hamilton Craigie.
94 "The Melody of Death," by Jack Bechdolt.
95 "The Trick of the Great Yen How," by William Hamilton Osborne.
96 "At Moriarity's," by Fred S. Shuey.
97 "The Last Star of the Films," by Jack Bechdolt.
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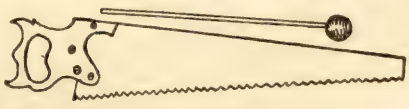

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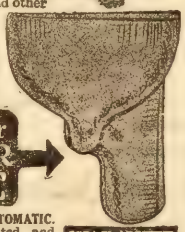

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How the "Inner Mysteries" Reveals Startling Facts Overlooked By Doctors and Scientists For Centuries

"I am eighty-three years old and I doctored for rheumatism ever since I came out of the army over fifty years ago," writes J. B. Ashelman. "Like many others, I spent money freely for so-called 'cures,' and I have read about 'Uric Acid' until I could almost taste it. I could not sleep nights or walk without pain; my hands were so sore and stiff I could not hold a pen. But now, as if by magic, I am again in active business and can walk with ease or write all day with comfort. Friends are surprised at the change."

HOW IT HAPPENED.

Mr. Ashelman is only one of thousands who suffered for years, owing to the general belief in the old, false theory that "Uric Acid" causes rheumatism. This erroneous belief induced him and legions of unfortunate men and women to take wrong treatments. You might just as well attempt to put out a fire with oil as to try and get rid of your rheumatism, neuritis and like complaints by taking treatments supposed to drive Uric Acid out of your blood and body. Many physicians and scientists now know that Uric Acid never did, never can and never will cause rheumatism; that it is a natural and necessary constituent of the blood; that it is found in every new-born babe; and that without it we could not live.

These statements may seem strange to some folks, who have all along been led to believe in the old "Uric Acid" humbug. It took Mr. Ashelman fifty years to find out this truth. He learned how to get rid of the true cause of his rheumatism, other disorders and recover his strength from "The Inner Mysteries," a remarkable book now being distributed free by an authority who devoted over twenty years to the scientific study of this particular trouble.

NOTE: If any reader of the "Mystery Magazine" wishes the book that reveals these facts regarding the true cause and cure of rheumatism, facts that were overlooked by doctors and scientists for centuries past, simply send a post card or letter to H. P. Clearwater, No. 1324-A Street, Halloweli, Maine, and it will be sent by return mail without any charge whatever. Cut out this notice lest you forget! If not a sufferer yourself hand this good news to some afflicted friend.

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The Long Island commuter had passed it many times before he noticed it. One morning he caught a glimpse of it as the train speeded by. The following day he determined to investigate.

The aquarium is about two feet long and eighteen inches high. One of the men employed in the signal station who is a lover of outdoors placed it there and tends it.

"It is a rather odd place to keep an aquarium, isn't it?" he remarked. "Well, I like flowers, but I can't grow them here under the street. So I tried an experiment with goldfish and they are thriving in their subterranean atmosphere. Down here in the darkness, away from the sunshine, these fish help me to pass the hours away. They aren't any trouble and they give me pleasure."

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But if they find that they are being overtaken and it is impossible to escape from their foes, they turn their babies out of their pouches and scamper off faster than ever. Although this action may appear to be somewhat unkind, yet, in reality, it is done for the best of reasons, for if the mother manages to get away from her pursuer, owing to her being no longer burdened with the weight of her infant, she afterward returns to look for her offspring, and once again puts it in pouch.

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